

Caring for a seriously ill loved one at home

Veronica O'Leary draws on her own experience following the recent death of her mother to offer advice on caring at home for a loved one who is seriously ill.

LEARNING THAT SOMEONE YOU LOVE is seriously ill and that the outlook is not good is very upsetting. It is an emotional time and people often do not know where to turn for help and information. With little time to prepare, a loved one can be discharged from hospital before a proper care plan is put into place. In this situation, families can find it difficult to cope with all the nursing and caring requirements, such as knowing where to get a special bed, oxygen and other important equipment.

Arrange a meeting with the doctor or nurse in charge to identify the best way forward. In consultation with your loved one's GP, Public Health Nurse and Palliative Home Care Nurse, work out a care plan. Other services may need to be involved such as Care Assistants, Pharmacists, Home Helps, Meals on Wheels, Physiotherapists, and Cancer Support Services. If possible, involve your loved one in the planning as it is important that they should also have a say.

As you work out the care plan:

- Write a schedule for all prescribed medicines and when they should be taken.
- Identify and plan for any special food or dietary requirements.
- Seek advice about lifting and moving.
- Consider the location of the bedroom and whether it might be necessary to move the patient to a more accessible room.
- Plan for the provision of oxygen, beds and any other special equipment that may be needed.
- Discuss nursing services that are available in the home.

It can be helpful to draw up a rota of carers for day and night times. If necessary, include the employment of care and nursing assistants on the rota to allow time for family members to rest and eat. A grant is available from the HSE for this. To find out more about this, speak to your GP, visiting nurse or see the list of contacts below.

BCSC's Home Support Programme offers one to two hours of support once or twice weekly, to allow family members caring for a loved one an opportunity to eat, rest or simply take a break. A total of 136 such visits took place during 2006, while we also provided 193 hours of home support to families. We also offer counselling and complementary therapies in the home to all family members. Our transport service is another valuable support to families. ♥

Useful Contact Telephone Numbers

Public Health Centres:

Bray 01 274 4001
 Shankill 01 282 0344
 Loughlinstown 01 282 2122
 Dun Laoghaire 01 284 3579

HSE Community Care Offices:

Dun Laoghaire 01 236 5200
 Clonskeagh 01 268 0300
 Wicklow 0404 68400

Home Help Services:

Bray (Contact May) 01 286 7509
 Dun Laoghaire 01 284 6989
 Stillorgan 01 217 2918
 Greystones 01 287 7311

Home Care Palliative Services:

Mrs. Hilary Brady,
 Blackrock Hospice 01 206 4000
 Ms. Grace Fraher, East Coast Area
 Health Board 0404 68400
 Mrs. Miriam McGrath, Bray &
 Wicklow Area Palliative Home
 Care Nurse 0404 68659

Further Contacts:

Bray Holy Redeemer Carers'
 Group (Helen) 01 286 0950
 Carers' Association,
 Bray (Andrea) 01 276 1760
 Meals on Wheels 01 286 7835
 Easi Cabs Transport
 Service (Subsidised) 01 272 4001

For Information on:

HSE Private Home Care Grants
 contact your local HSE office
 Managing your money, contact
 MABS Bray 01 276 0411
 Professional agencies providing care
 for seniors in the home, contact
 BCSC 01 286 6966

Further Reading:

A Time to Care: Caring for Someone Seriously Ill at Home and
Lost for Words: How to Talk to Someone with Cancer. Booklets
 available from both BCSC and the
 Irish Cancer Society (01 231 0500)

Women's Mini Marathon

Even grey skies and pelting rain failed to dampen the spirits of the thousands of women who turned out for the 2007 Flora Women's Mini Marathon last June Bank Holiday. Among them was a large contingent running for BCSC. Their enthusiastic participation ensured the marathon continues to be the single most important event on our fundraising calendar. BCSC wishes to thank all our sponsored runners, along with all those who supported them and provided logistical back-up on the day. Special thanks to Kerry Foods, Tipperary Water and Coca Cola Bottlers for kindly donating products, and to Pat Irwin of Ely House for providing the venue for the day. ♥

Thank You One and All

BCSC wishes to acknowledge and thank all those individuals, companies, clubs and other organisations that have raised funds or made donations to BCSC over recent months. The ladies of the Bray and District Soroptomists for a cheque presentation in Bray Town Hall; the employees of Dell Direct, Cherrywood, for payroll donations; the Bray Manchester United Supporters Club for proceeds from a race night in the Royal Hotel; the Shankill ICA for funds raised at cake and craft sale; the Bray Head Fishing and Social Club for a fundraising quiz night; customers and staff of Kavanagh's Pub, Bray for the proceeds of a table quiz; Bray New Directions Young Men's Group for organising a sponsored car wash; the staff of the Porterhouse Bar, Bray, for organising and taking part in a sponsored leg wax and head shave; and all those who organised, performed in or supported the fundraising gala. ♥



Ouch! Staff from the Porterhouse, Bray taking part in the recent sponsored head shave and leg waxing in aid of BCSC.

Helpful Hints

- Bring prescriptions to your pharmacy the day before discharge to ensure all medication is in stock. Keep a list of your loved one's medication for reference by visiting doctors, nurses and other carers.
- Draw up a list of phone numbers of doctors, nurses, carers, clergy, family members and others whom you may need to call.
- Start a daily logbook to keep track of changes in symptoms and medication, visits, medical and other care comments, and all other key details. Such a record can be an invaluable source of reference.