



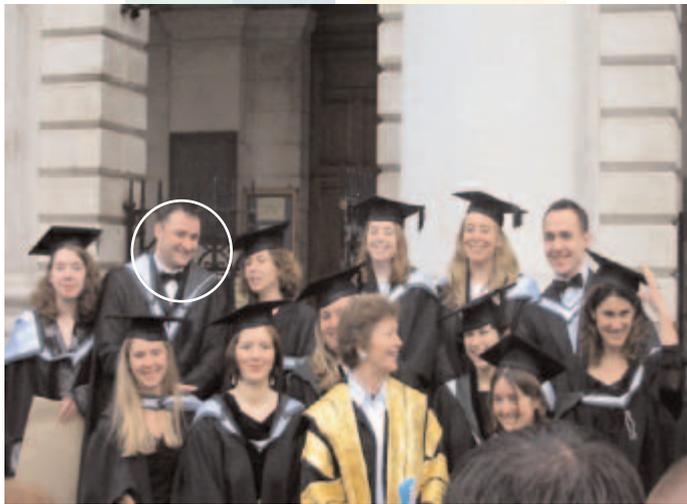
DEMENTIA SERVICES INFORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE  
promoting excellence in dementia care

# Newsletter

Issue: No. 7 Spring 2003

## Introduction:

Hello everyone and welcome to this the Spring edition of the DSIDC newsletter. The last quarter as you will glean, has indeed been very busy; responding to your various requests for education and training and dealing with the many interesting queries and demands placed on our information and library services. Staff at the Centre have also been active putting together the final touches on a video production about the brain and behaviour. The video (soon to be launched) has been made in direct response to your own requests at workshops and training days and provides a broad overview of dementia. It contains both detailed information about the normal brain and its functioning and demonstrates through case examples what happens inside a person's brain when an illness like dementia occurs. The video will be used as an aid in workshops and a training manual to accompany it is now likely to be developed. The last quarter also saw the Centre's first MS.c in Applied Research student, Nick Clarke, graduate with a first class honours degree (see photo below).



*Nicholas Clark being conferred at Trinity College Dublin - December 2002.*

Congratulations to Nick for his excellent research endeavours. His thesis entitled "Out of Duty" (available in the library) is a qualitative study examining the issue of the purpose and meaning behind visiting a person with dementia in long term care. The period was also marked by the Centre's participation at various conferences including the 50th Irish Gerontological Society meeting in Cork (September) and a National Conference for Older People held in Limerick in November. The latter was a two day meeting co-hosted by the Mid Western Health Board, the National Council on Ageing and Older People, the Health Promotion Unit of the Department of Health and Age and Opportunity.

The conference explored the obstacles and opportunities for older people posed by assistive, information and communication technologies. The Enable project (see overleaf) is now almost two years in progress and a Mid Term Review commissioned by its funders (the EU) took place in Bath in October. We are happy to report that the project was very well evaluated and new contracts signed, allowing Lithuania join the consortium. Other highlights of the last quarter include the Centre's launching a new Fellowship scheme offering an award for post-graduate studies in dementia care. The fellowship provides a small bursary (one) to support studies and to help defray University post-graduate fees. The bursary will be made available to students across a wide range of disciplines. Finally, just to remind you this newsletter is designed for you. So if any of you our readers have useful insights on dementia, or practice tips to share, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Remember also that newsletters can now be downloaded from our website [www.dementia.ie](http://www.dementia.ie). We very much look forward to hearing from you and continuing to work with you in 2003.

*Suzanne Cahill  
Director*

## Education & Training News:

Since our last Newsletter I had the opportunity to attend the 18th International Conference of Alzheimer's Disease in Barcelona. The conference theme was 'Dementia: meeting the challenge together'. While there were many very interesting and stimulating presentations, the most inspiring aspect of the conference was the real and active participation of many people who were living with some form of dementia. Like 'Barbara' from Canada, aged 52, a chartered accountant by profession with two university going daughters. Barbara spoke from the floor during a workshop about 'Activities for people with dementia' and told us she was currently taking Aricept or Exelon. Chillingly, she said, 'I cannot afford to think of a time when my drugs may no longer work'. Cheston & Bender ('99) in their book 'Understanding dementia' remind us that we will exacerbate the disability of dementia if we neglect the experiences of people who have a dementia and ignore the impact of their social world. Barcelona has hopefully ensured that this will not happen and that the voice of the person with dementia will be heard and included.

Here at DSIDC, the new term has begun and 2003 promises to be busy with many workshops booked well in advance.

An extra mural course in Dementia Care is currently underway on a Monday night and staff from a number of residential care settings both public and private, are participating. They will be awarded their certificates on Monday 10th March.

### *Did you know ?*

Singing can be a very useful therapeutic intervention in dementia care. The value of the Arts in general and Music in particular have long been recognised as effective communication tools in Dementia Care. A study by a group of Swedish Occupational Therapists evaluated the benefits of caregivers singing a familiar or favourite song while engaging with the person in daily routines or activities. Caregiver singing during personal care had a paradoxical effect; despite a lack of verbal instruction, people with dementia seemed to understand what was happening; there was a strong sense of cooperation and more of the person own personality emerged. Why not try it out and see for yourself.

### *New arrivals to our library :*

#### *New books:-*

##### *'Evidence-based Dementia Practice'*

<http://www.ebdementia.info> for free access to 10 chapters and updates of this publication

#### *New journals with a multi disciplinary appeal include: -*

*'Alzheimer Care Quarterly'*

*'Journal of Mental Health & Ageing'*

*'Qualitative Health Research'*

#### *Book Reviews:*

##### *1. 'Designing Gardens for People with Dementia.'*

Author: Annie Pollock

Published by: DSIDC Stirling. ISBN 1 -85769 -128 -8.

Can you imagine what it might be like to live in a place with no access to the outdoors or to a garden? Unfortunately this is the reality for many Irish people who have a dementia. Residential care settings, with no safe outdoor space and/or insufficient staff to supervise those who would wish to be outdoors, are not uncommon. Here at DSIDC, we have a wonderful range of library material on designing appropriate environments for those with a dementia and specialised garden design is an important aspect of this material. This little booklet by Annie Pollock assesses the essential features of 'The Forget Me Not Garden' and takes the reader step by step through each element of the garden, from the patio, to path design, to fencing and furnishing with suggestions and tips for trees, shrubs and planting.

The booklet is beautifully produced with an array of appealing pictures but it's real value lies in the author's understanding of the disability of dementia and how the features of this disability, need to be accounted for in designing a garden.

Indirectly the book also reminds us of the person's ongoing need of sensory pleasure & stimulation.

Get thinking about your care setting. Is there any area that you could utilise to create a garden? If so, avail of our library and you will find lots of food for thought.

## *2. 'Aging with Grace'*

Author: David Snowdon (2001).

Published by: Fourth Estate ISBN: 1841152919

This is a fascinating account of the ageing experiences of a group of some 678 Notre Dame nuns across several convents in the US who agreed to participate in a longitudinal study of ageing and Alzheimer's Disease and to donate their brains to science following death. Its author David Snowdon (one of the world's leading experts on Alzheimer's Disease) was allowed access to these nun's medical and personal records. The relationship between symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease and the damage to the brain that causes these symptoms is the central focus of the Nun's Study. Some of the book's key findings include the fact that pathology alone can be misleading; some nuns who remained cognitively intact in their ageing years had on autopsy, brains which reflected the plaques and tangles of Alzheimer's Disease. Some of the questions raised in the book include; why are some people resistant to Alzheimer's Disease and what factors, genetic, dietary, educational, or environmental contribute to people developing this condition? Chapter 7 contains a particularly inspirational analysis of the relationship between linguistic ability in earlier life and these nun's late life propensity to develop Alzheimer's Disease. The postulants with the richest and most complex vocabularies seemed to figure better off in later life in terms of being protected against Alzheimer's Disease. The book is a definite must, its lively informative, engaging and very easy to read.

### *Enable Update:*

The ENABLE project (enabling technologies for people with dementia) is going very well. This project funded under the European Commission's programme for Quality of Life and Management of Living Resources has been ongoing in the Centre since March 2001. More recently Lithuania has joined bringing the partner countries to five along with Ireland, Great Britain, Norway and Finland. Half of our sample of 42 people has already been recruited and the Picture Gramophone assessment in a day centre in Dublin is nearly complete. This is a computer programme to promote "sing along's" for people with dementia. The other products still available for distribution are item locators, automatic night and day calendars, automatic night lights and automatic gas cooker switches. So if anyone knows a person with dementia, or a family carer who might benefit from these items please call the Centre on 01-4162035.

