



Newsletter

Issue: No. 9 Spring 2004

Introduction

Greetings everyone. It is now some 6 months since we last went to Press and much has happened at the DSIDC in the interim time, including the design of new training modules, innovative research projects being spawned, a second training video being developed and a general buzz of professional activity around. Thanks to in-put from committed staff members and partners, December saw the successful launching of the Centre's first national conference on dementia and quality care standards and eminent speakers came from home and abroad. The conference theme - that of promoting quality standards in the acute, community and residential care sectors in Ireland is one close to the hearts of most of us touched by dementia and working in the field in Ireland. We are pleased to report that this event was extremely well evaluated and scientific papers can now be downloaded from our website www.dementia.ie. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who gave of their time so generously to support the Centre in this first conference initiative and those who participated at the conference in many different ways. In collaboration with the Irish College of General Practitioners, the November/December period also saw the launching of a nationwide survey of GP's designed to examine medical practitioner's attitudes and practices in relation to dementia diagnosis. Recently we have also spent much time re-working our DSIDC website which has acquired a new home page and has many additional materials including new links created with strategic partners. Interest in dementia studies as a speciality in its own right continues to grow and we are very pleased to announce that the new DSIDC Fellowship award for 2004 has been granted to Catherine Keogh, Senior Occupational Therapist at St. Vincent's Hospital Elm Park. Catherine will be writing her dissertation in the area of meaningful activities and the new culture of care. Congratulations are also due Emer Begley, Co-ordinator of the ENABLE project who has recently been awarded a three year full time Scholarship from Trinity College Dublin to write her PhD in the area of the subjective experience of dementia. Emer's interest in this area has been generated by her involvement with families in ENABLE and her thesis will have a social policy focus. The Centre welcomes visitors from at home and afar and we recently had a delegation of Japanese aged and dementia care experts visit keen to find out more about dementia care in Ireland. Should you wish to visit the Centre, please contact our administrator on 01- 4162035.

Education and Training News:

Since our last newsletter, requests for training continue to pour in and between December and now, several workshops, specialist study days, journal clubs and seminars have been held around the country. Training days have taken place in areas as far a field as Cork, Kerry, Ardee, Enniscorthy and all over Dublin. Back at the Centre, Extra Mural classes continue to be popular. News of training probably spreads most rapidly by word of mouth and Extra Mural classes have resulted in an ever-increasing demand for new places. The March/April sessions are now already fully booked so if you have missed out this term, the good news is that evening classes will resume again in September 2004. Sarah Marsh, our Assistant Education Officer has also been busy collating and disseminating a variety of information on topics such as Design and Dementia, Challenging Behaviours, Pharmacotherapy and Dementia Care Mapping. We welcome feedback from library users, should you have any suggestions on how we might expand this service.

Enable Update:

Irish Evaluation Study of the ENABLE project

Data collection for Enable – a longitudinal study on technology and dementia will soon finish with a total of 32 Irish families having participated in the project. Each country has put together a National Report and a cross-country report is currently being drafted. It is interesting to note when comparing the Irish data to that of the other four countries (Norway, Finland, the UK and Lithuania) that we figure poorly in terms of income supports available to family caregivers. Irish primary caregivers also experience higher levels of stress when compared with our other European counterparts. Factors explaining high burden scores amongst Irish family caregivers are now being investigated. Five research articles emanating from the project have been accepted for publication. These papers address topics such as designing technologies, cost-benefit issues, quality of life, ethics and an evaluation of the Picturegramophone – a clever CD Rom and computerised device, designed by a Finnish Occupational Therapist. If you would like more information on the ENABLE project go to www.enableproject.org. The final project meeting and conference takes place in Oslo in June and conference places are still available. For further information and registration forms please contact the DSIDC.

GP Study:

The Centre, in collaboration with the ICGP, has recently undertaken a national survey of General Practitioners. This work is being co-ordinated by Maeve Clark, Research Assistant.

The specific aims of the study are:

- To address GP's current diagnostic practices in relation to dementia
- To ascertain barriers to best practice in diagnosing dementia
- To investigate disclosure patterns in conveying diagnosis
- To examine GPs training needs in relation to dementia

A total of 600 GP's were sampled and we are pleased to report that a high response rate – of 60% has been achieved. Postal questionnaires were well answered with much valuable quantitative and qualitative data generated. Data analysis is currently underway and some interesting findings in relation to gender issues, barriers to diagnosis, waiting time for services, tools used and tests ordered by GPs are emerging. A summary of key findings from this work will be presented in the next edition of this newsletter.

Memory Clinic:

The Social Work Service at the Memory Clinic is fully operational with the new Social Worker, Matthew Gibb, now in post over 9 months. Since his appointment, Matthew has been busy building up a client base, and looking after the social work needs of patients and their families attending the Memory Clinic. Matthew has also been involved in Extra Mural classes and in some of the Centre's other Dementia related activities including the recent ERHA review of Mental Health services.

Events Guide:

The 14th Alzheimer Europe Conference will be taking place in Prague on the 20th – 23rd May 2004. Details can be found on: www.alzheimer-conference.org

The final ENABLE conference is being held in Oslo on 20th – 22nd June 2004. For further information on this project and the conference, please see: www.enableproject.org

The 9th International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders will be held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA on the 17th – 22nd July, 2004. Further details are available on: www.alz.org/internationalconference

The European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in association with PROCARE are holding an International Conference in Venice on the 21st to the 23rd October 2004. The conference is entitled 'Providing integrated health and social care for older persons - Facing the challenges in Europe'

Further information is available by e-mail. Contact: leichsenring@euro.centre.org
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What's new from the research literature?

"Assessment Scales in Old Age Psychiatry" (2nd Edition)
– Alistair Burns, Brian Lawlor and Sarah Craig.

Building on the success of the first edition, the authors have compiled a comprehensive compendium of over 200 scales across the field of mental health problems in the elderly. Scales are accompanied by information on the completion of each instrument and a commentary to allow the reader see, at a glance, the scope of the scale and its application. The ever increasing number of older people being diagnosed with mental disorders, means that this authoritative guide is both timely and is an essential tool for everyone involved in assessing the mental health problems of the elderly and the effect that these may have on a patient's functional ability. The book also has the added advantage of having an important contribution from Dr. Robert Coen, Neuropsychologist at MIRA.

"Isn't an awful lot you can do to entertain them." A study of the role and benefits of activities for people with dementia in nursing homes in Ireland – Avril Dooley, Thesis, MSc. in Applied Social Research. (Sept 2003)



Avril Dooley's conferring at Trinity College, December 2003.

This study examines the way in which Private and Voluntary nursing homes currently address the psychosocial needs of people with dementia. It highlights some of the difficulties, staff experience attempting to address the complex needs of people with dementia in the same environment where more physically disabled but cognitively intact residents live. It argues for the need to provide meaningful activities that link back to the individual's life history and biography. It identifies factors such as, nursing home location, management type, the cost of care and the level of dementia specific training, which play a key role in the provision of activities. The research has highlighted a philosophy of care in Ireland, largely underpinned by person-centred principles. A copy of this thesis is now available in the DSIDC library. We are happy to report how Avril who worked on placement at the Centre while doing this research, received a first class honours degree from Trinity for her excellent work.



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