

# VSS News

Volunteer Stroke Scheme

Issue 11

May 1996

## Anne Copeland's Column

### *Understanding Stroke – (Video and Booklet)*

What precisely is a stroke? What causes it? These are questions people commonly ask when a family member or relative suffers a stroke. People seem to be much more aware of heart attack than they are of stroke. A fatalistic attitude to stroke seems to exist, almost an acceptance that it is an inevitable event in some people's lives. When people realise that they themselves can play a major role in preventing strokes, they are genuinely interested. People are also alarmed to realise that it is not just the over 65s that are at risk but that younger people are also affected.

In order to increase stroke awareness the VSS produced a video and booklet called 'Understanding Stroke'. It was launched in February 1996 in the Education and Research Centre in St. Vincent's Hospital, Elm Park. Canada Life Assurance Company sponsored the complete project. We are extremely grateful to them for this. Once again, we had the full co-operation and commitment of Mr. Vincent Keaveny, Vascular Consultant, and Dr. Morgan Crowe, Consultant Geriatrician. They are the medical contributors to our booklet and video and they appear on the video itself. Many of our own stroke friends also appear. Alex Tuohy gives an amusing account of his bid for stardom in this issue of VSS news. The video explains what stroke is and outlines the main factors which cause stroke. It also explains that there are warning signs or symptoms, which, if acted upon early enough, can reduce the risk of full stroke. It also covers the various screening procedures that are available to detect any vulnerability in the arteries. Lifestyle is also dealt with, explaining how all of us can reduce our risk by being moderate in our habits and, not surprisingly, by not smoking.

Rehabilitation is explained through visiting the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dún Laoghaire. One can also learn how the VSS help stroke patients come to terms with life after stroke through their clubs and home visits. The video is made to the highest



professional standards. It is attractive and easy to understand. It will do much to spread a greater understanding of stroke as well as encouraging stroke people and their families.

The video will be available to rent from all 140 Xtra-Vision stores throughout Ireland from the end of May 1996. It is also available to buy from our Office at 249 Crumlin Road Dublin 12 (telephone 01-4559036). The cost of the video and booklet is £11.50, postage and packaging included. The booklet is also available in all Dublin libraries and the video is available in the library in the Ilac Centre.

We were really pleased in the VSS with the level of support we got from all sections of the media at the press launch. RTE radio and television covered the event as did the major national newspapers. As a consequence of this the topic of stroke was discussed on most of the community radio stations around the country. All of the coverage will help to create a greater awareness of stroke and hopefully will help in its prevention.

The main aim of the VSS is to support stroke patients and their families in the community. I take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers who make the work of the VSS possible.

I wish you all a happy and healthy 1996.

### Contents

- 1 Anne Copeland's Column
- 2 Puzzle Page
- 3 The President at the Monday Club *Erica O'Mara*
- 4 Update On North Dublin *Erica O'Mara*
- 5 1995 – Progress on all Fronts *Theo Davis*
- 6 South Dublin Reports *Eileen Murtagh*
- 7 The Making of the Video *Alex Tuohy*
- 8 Photo Album
- 10 Rehabilitation After Stroke *Dr Angela McNamara*
- 12 The Nurse & Stroke Rehabilitation *Bernadette Lee*
- 14 Westmeath Stroke Scheme *Mary Mahon*
- 15 Money Matters *John L'Estrange*

# Puzzle Page

## Plants and Trees

- On which trees do acorns grow?
- Name some conifers?
- Which tree has silvery bark?
- Name some fruit trees?
- Which tree has prickly leaves?
- Which edible nuts can you think of?
- Where does the sap run in trees?
- Why do trees lose their leaves?
- What plants do you connect with Christmas?
- What are the national emblems of
  - England?
  - Scotland?
  - Wales?
  - Ireland?
- Name some fungi?
- Why do bees go into flowers?
- Name some climbing plants?
- Why do you put mulch on a border

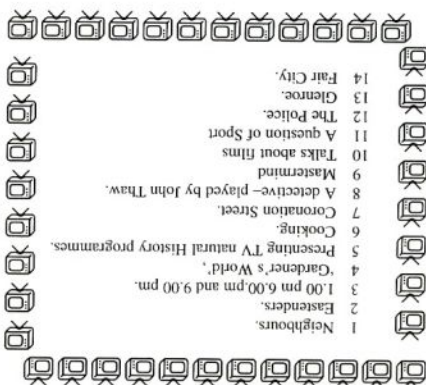


## Television

- Name a famous Australian 'soap opera'.
- Name a well-known London 'soap opera'.
- At what times are the main news programmes on RTE 1.
- Name some TV gardening programmes.
- What is David Attenborough famous for?
- What is Delia Smith's speciality?
- Which well-known 'soap opera' is called \_\_\_\_\_ Street?
- Who is 'Morse'?
- Which quiz programme does Magnus Magnusson present?
- What does Barry Norman do on TV?
- What quiz programme links these two sporting names – Ian Botham and Bill Beaumont?
- What is 'The Bill' about?
- What is the name of the 'soap opera' on Sunday RTE 1?
- What is the Dublin-based 'soap opera' on RTE 1 called?



- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Oak   |
| 2  | Pine, fir, spruce, yew.                         |
| 3  | Silver birch.                                   |
| 4  | Apple, pear, plum, cherry, etc.                 |
| 5  | Holly.  |
| 6  | Hazel, almond, walnut, chestnut, etc.           |
| 7  | Behind the bark.                                |
| 8  | To protect them from the cold.                  |
| 9  | Holly, ivy, mistletoe, spruce (Christmas tree). |
| 10 | a. Rose b. Thistle c. Leek and daffodil         |
| 11 | d. Shamrock.                                    |
| 12 | Mushroom, toadstool, puff-ball, truffle, etc.   |
| 13 | To collect nectar.                              |
| 14 | To stifle weeds and help growth.                |



- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Neighbours.                                |
| 2  | Eastenders.                                |
| 3  | 1.00 pm 6.00 pm and 9.00 pm.               |
| 4  | 'Gardeners' World'.                        |
| 5  | Presenting 'TV natural History programmes. |
| 6  | Cooking.                                   |
| 7  | Coronation Street.                         |
| 8  | A detective – played by John Thaw.         |
| 9  | Mastermind                                 |
| 10 | Talks about films                          |
| 11 | A question of Sport                        |
| 12 | The Police.                                |
| 13 | Glenroe.                                   |
| 14 | Fair City.                                 |

Answers

# The President Blows Out Ten Candles In The Monday Club – On A Return Visit

**Erica O'Mara**

The Angelus bells were ringing out on Monday from nearby St Luke's Church as Anne Copeland, Sr. Margaret and myself waited at the end of the ramp for President Mary Robinson to arrive. As the Presidential car swept in through the gate I felt so proud that she had come once more to our Monday Club, and hoped the bells would have finished before I gave my brief welcome so that she would hear what I said. However she did hear and also commented on the lovely sound of the bells.

Having introduced the President to Anne Copeland and Sr. Margaret we went in to the Centre where she received a really warm welcome from both Clubs, as the Wednesday Club had also been invited, a fact noted with approval by the President.

I kept my introductory remarks very brief, not wanting to use up too much of this precious brief visit. The President commenced with the remembrance of being at the Monday Club's Fifth Birthday and of her remark that she would still be President on our Tenth Birthday. It was, she said a lovely feeling to be honouring a commitment made five years ago. For us all it was fantastic that she was here again, as gracious and smiling as ever and clearly very interested in all that we were doing in the Stroke Clubs. She presented trophies for Club Person of the year – one to John Richards and the other to Bert Smith – alias Santa – who is at present in Beaumont Hospital. His wife, Peggy, accepted it on his behalf along with all our good wishes. Bill Doran, one of our stroke people and Ann Dignam, a volunteer, each received a trophy for darts. A friend of Anne Copeland's Peter Dwane sang

"If I can help somebody" – a song we regard as our anthem. Bridie Kenneally, both stroke person and volunteer, presented a basket of flowers arranged by herself.

The ten candles on the cake were lit and together with our Chairperson, Anne Copeland, and myself, the President blew out the candles. Then the most important part of the visit, when our country's First Lady shook hands with every one of the 96 people present, being very aware when a stroke person needed to be shaken hands with on a particular side. She complimented the drivers and volunteers on their dedication and loyalty, particularly stressing their value to a voluntary association such as ours. Of course the time melted away so fast, but the memories of this magical morning would never fade.

Many thanks to the President from us all.



*President Mary Robinson, Erica O'Mara & Anne Copeland*



*President meeting Sr. Margaret & Erica in Centre*



*President Mary Robinson, Erica O'Mara & Anne Copeland*



*L-R Brid Murphy, Anne Copeland, Joan Monahan & Theo Davis members of VSS Committee*



# Update On North Dublin

## Erica O'Mara, Supervisor North Dublin



Our Monday and Wednesday Clubs are two separate Clubs but with several things in common. We join up for our Christmas Party and again for our Summer outing,

and, as reported elsewhere, for Presidential visits. The stroke people in each Club have very much the same problems, hopes and fears but one lovely thing shared by both Clubs is the spirited and friendly atmosphere which is so encouraging especially to new members. The main noise in each Club is laughter, with a welcome so whole-hearted that it is uplifting just to walk in the door each Club morning. One of the nicest things is the way one always comes home in better spirits. Personally I consider that every stroke person deserves a medal simply for getting up every morning but more than that everyone arrives at Club so well dressed and smartly turned out that they make every morning into a special occasion. Club members who have been sick or even on holiday get a great reception on their return. No matter why or how long a person has left they are never forgotten by the others and I am frequently asked for news of absent friends.

Our many and varied activities range from darts and dominoes to cards, board games, skittles and scrabble. Crafts have become very popular especially painting and a new venture – making our own dried flower greeting cards reserved for any of our members who are celebrating special birthdays or for those who are sick. Recently one lady got a birthday card that she had helped to make from the Club!

A Public Library scheme was brought to my attention and we took advantage of it and borrowed 18 books and 2 tapes of books. These will be on loan to the Stroke Clubs for three months and we will not be liable for any losses. At this stage we have discovered varied reading interests as well as preferences for visual books for those who can no longer read well.

On rare occasions we have Bingo with Paul calling the numbers with expertise and a great sense of humour. The prizes are unbelievable – 20p a line and 50p for full house. It means holding your breath in case of any sharers in your good fortune.

Our two physiotherapists, Maire and Anne, have their

regular group sessions every fortnight in each Club. They also give individual help and advice.

We have continued to have the teams of girls from the Transition Year in St John of God's Secondary School in Kilmore Road. The girls are different from last year but show the same dedication as last year's teams, making it a two way project beneficial to both of us.

In April 1995 we celebrated our Monday Club's 9th Birthday. Our volunteers provided cakes and sandwiches and we provided our own entertainment including line dancing by some energetic volunteers. It was great to welcome back Paddy McLoughlin who had a second stroke last November and Enda Faughnan, following her heart operation. Each of them received an award for Club Person of the Year as did Jack Lawlor.

During the year the Clubs found their separate ways to Dollymount House and the Monday Club's last visit was to the Goblet in Artane. All these mornings were very pleasant with the time going all too fast.

Our Summer outing for the combined Clubs was further afield – to the Hotel Neptune in Bettystown. It was one of many glorious days of last summer and the hotel was right on the beach, with a tide full in. With a lovely lunch over, some sat indoors, others sat outside – in the shade or sunshine. A few had a swim and a bigger group, including myself, had a most leisurely and enjoyable paddle. One chap in a wheelchair was sitting with his back to his companions and I went around to see why, it was to find that his drink was within reach on a low wall and Joe was, as he said, just enjoying himself. That was true of all of us that day.

Eight stroke people from each Club and four volunteers went on a respite break to Kilkeel, Co Down in September and the weekend was a great success. The Kilmoray Arms Hotel was lovely in every way, with the staff really pleased that we were enjoying ourselves. Those who went are still reliving the memories and one lady says it was the best thing that happened to her since her stroke.

Last October we had the Southside Club over to play a darts match against the Wednesday Club. Our team won – a sweet victory as we had been beaten in the last two matches.

The Christmas Party for the Monday and Wednesday Clubs was held in the Clontarf Lawn Tennis Club, the venue being arranged by one of our drivers. We

arranged for a caterer to do the Christmas Dinner which was lovely, with a real homemade flavour. We had members from a variety group to provide entertainment as well as a musical trio – both very popular with everyone. All in all it was a great success with everyone enjoying themselves. Theo and Eileen Murtagh joined us and we had 83 for dinner, 84 counting the hungry barman.

In January it was the Monday Club's turn for a contest – this time with the Coolock Day Activity Centre, The Central Remedial Clinic and the Irish Wheelchair Association. The latter group provided the Quizmaster

who was an excellent choice. It was a close contest all the way and our team won by just one point in the last round. It was an enjoyable morning for everyone and we all look forward to a re-match. As darts and quiz champions we have a reputation to defend next year.

We were fortunate in getting some new drivers during the year and we hope they will continue to enjoy being with us and with the passengers they drive. A warm word of thanks to our other drivers and volunteers who have given so generously of their time and energy. The same also applies to Sr Margaret, always so helpful and cheerful.

## 1995 – Progress on all Fronts

### *Theo Davis, Honorary Secretary, VSS*

The year gone by has been a very successful but busy time for all involved with the Volunteer Stroke Scheme.

The video and booklet were produced and launched and they have already done a great deal in promoting the VSS and stroke prevention. Due to the media coverage on radio, TV and in the newspapers which the launch of the video and booklet received, an unprecedented amount of both phone and postal queries were received by the office, enabling us to help many stroke patients and their families.

We manned a table at the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dún Laoghaire for a Seminar on stroke being held there which also gave us the opportunity to promote and advertise our services. This was a resounding success.

A number of queries were received asking advice on starting Stroke Support groups around the country. We intend following up on these as clubs have proved to be of enormous help in alleviating the many difficulties encountered by those affected by stroke. Troubles shared are troubles halved and the encouragement obtained from everyone who is in the same situation as yourself helps a great deal. Morale is boosted greatly when one observes the great progress made by friends.

The computer finally arrived and I had great fun learning the basics. It was like learning to drive a car – the pride and excitement at every little achievement



*Theo Davis*

was very uplifting. I felt like framing the first print out – Picasso look out! It is a great help in the office especially at the present time when things are so busy.

In August our own phone and answering machine were installed in the office and they

are proving to be a great help. I can even ring in from home and pick up any messages by dialling a special code. It was too late to have our number listed in the 1996/97 directory but we will be included in the next one. The number is 01-4559036. Calls on the old number will still be passed on to me.

Last year's newsletter was posted to all the GPs in the greater Dublin area – a total of 611 in all. This was another way the Committee felt would let people know about us.

In conclusion I would like to thank the VSS Committee, Supervisors, Volunteers and stroke members for all the help and encouragement during the many events in the past. Particular thanks to Mr. Richard Holmes and all the staff of Brainwave (Irish Epilepsy Association) who continue to give the VSS office space and pass on messages to me. They are always helpful in so many ways.

I look forward to a good year ahead and wish you all a great Summer to enjoy.

# South Dublin Reports

## *Eileen Murtagh, Supervisor*

The Volunteer Stroke Scheme in Dublin's Southside covers an area south of the Liffey, reaching out to the Dublin/Wicklow border. Although this is a large area the majority of people who are active in our Scheme live in the areas adjacent to our Stroke Club which is located in Lower Kimmage Road. A smaller number live in the wider Dublin area.

The home visits by our Volunteers are operating in the areas of Crumlin, Kilmainham, Tallaght, Cabinteely and Dalkey. As well as encouraging speech, these visits aim to restore the person's confidence and independence.

Our Club members meet weekly on Thursday mornings. In Club over a cup of tea they exchange news and relate their achievements and disappointments. All participate in club activities and many of them organise individual games such as Darts, Dominoes and Quizzes. Club Volunteers help but allow Stroke Members to do as much as possible for themselves. An Art group has started under the guidance of Michael Launders who is a Club Volunteer. Many are trying this activity for the first time while others who are experienced at painting are helping the beginners.

Eight members from our Club were lucky to be chosen for a Respite Break to Kilkeel, Co. Down in September 1995. Along with the equivalent number

from each of the two Northside Clubs and eight Volunteers, a total of thirty two went on the P.A.B. Coach Tour of the Mountains of Mourne. For many of those who went, it was a holiday to remember and some comments afterwards were: "I'd never have got away on a holiday only for that break and my wife needed a break from me too." Another quote was "It was one of the best things that has happened to me since I had the stroke".

Many visitors came to the South Dublin Club during the year. In May 1995, Bonnie Brennan, Occupational Therapist with the National Rehabilitation Board (NRB), came and showed the NRB Video and demonstrated some aids and appliances which would be of use to people with disabilities. Some of these were: bookstands for reading; saucepan guard; easi-grip keyholder and bottle openers. She gave information on where these items can be purchased as well as advice on procedures for getting the appliances through the Health Board. In February 1996 Pat Cremin from the Wexford Volunteer Stroke Scheme paid a visit to our Club to exchange ideas and to observe another Stroke Club in action. In March 1996 three student nurses from the Adelaide Hospital were on placement with us to learn about our Organisation. They enthusiastically joined in with all the Club activities and asked questions about the Scheme.

The Southside Club went on many outings during 1995:

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| April 27th    | Trip to Howth and Dollymount House;  |
| June 22nd     | St. Enda's Park and Pearse Museum, Rathfarnham. It was one of the most beautiful days of the year and after a tour of the Museum we had lunch in the restaurant followed by folk music in the courtyard;   |
| July 27th     | Glendalough, Co. Wicklow. This was another glorious day out. We hired a coach and the driver took the scenic route over the Wicklow mountains. Lunch was had in the Glendalough Hotel and afterwards we had sing songs out in the sunshine;  |
| September     | Holiday to Kilkeel, Co. Down for some members;   |
| October       | Darts match with the North Dublin Club. Our Darts team travelled to Coolock to compete for the trophy but this time, we were beaten and had to relinquish the trophy which we had held for a few years. Never mind, we will have it back next time - bring back Jack Charlton!   |
| November 30th | Shopping trip to the Square in Tallaght;   |
| December 15th | Christmas Dinner in Evergreen Hall, Terenure. This venue was ideal as it was on the level and accessible to those in wheelchairs. Dinner was cooked by visiting Chef Tony. The entertainment, which was provided free of charge, was a two man group headed by Joe O'Reilly. They were excellent. Our own members provided a lot of the entertainment with songs from Jimmy Palmer, Paddy Duffy and wife Margaret and Stephen Kerr. Almost all our Volunteers gave us a song and we had a reel and a hornpipe from Gerry Keogh's wife, Mary. We are able to keep up with Riverdance. Bridie Lyons made a video recording of the party and it was shown in Club in January, 1996. |





*Eileen Murtagh*

The success of those outings was due to the generosity of many people, including Fr. Joe Kennedy, Mount Argus Community, who brought many people in his mini-bus, Volunteer drivers who generously brought people in their cars and other Volunteers who helped people on to buses and walked with them when on the outings.

A meeting with Club Volunteers was held in September 1995, in order to plan for the coming year. Volunteers' outing took place after Christmas. A training course for Volunteers is now being prepared and will take place before the summer.

The Volunteer Stroke Scheme Video which was launched in February 1996 features two Southside members, Alex Tuohy and Mary Hanlon. Both attended the launch in St. Vincent's Hospital.

Thanks to Volunteers, Home Visit, Club and Drivers and to Sister Una, who manages the Community Centre where our Club is held, for use of Video and having the premises in order for us each week.

A happy 1996 to all.

## **The Making of the Video by Alex Tuohy**

**37 Lonsdale Lawns, Springfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24**

*Alex had a stroke in the Spring of 1995.*

In the summer of 1995, I was approached, among several others, to participate in the making of a video for the VSS in conjunction with the Canada Life Assurance Company.

Nuala, my Speech Therapist and Tadhg, my Occupational Therapist, encouraged me to take part and not knowing what was involved, I said a very tentative YES.



*Alex Tuohy*

The day of my debut as a film star dawned! I arose, washed myself, got dressed, queued up for breakfast and went about doing all the normal things. The first item on my list was the pool – where Jane, my physiotherapist, was waiting to put me through my paces for about three-quarters of an hour. After that was over, all hell broke loose – the Sister, Nurses and Speech Therapist were all looking for me to take part in the video.

And finally, it was my turn to face the camera. I needed a shirt for one of the scenes I was to take part in and I didn't have one, so Tadhg had to run up to the ward to get one. Having got the shirt I was wheeled into the bedroom which they have for demonstration purposes

and I was told to put on the shirt while they were filming it. I was not embarrassed by having to take off the shirt on camera!

About ten minutes later I was to do Speech Therapy with Nuala. I started to do it on the computer working on my words and pitches. Anne Copeland was there and she gave me great confidence. What finally came out is a very good

production and I would recommend it to everyone. I am glad to have been involved.

All requests for further film engagements should be sent to my agent!



# VOLUNTEER ST

THE NORTH AND SOUTH CLUBS AT THE



*President and Erica O'Mara*



*President presenting John Richards with trophy for Club Person of the Year*



*Northsiders & Southsiders meet -  
"Lost our Darts trophy to the Northsiders"*



*Volunteers L-R Kitty Cullen, Teresa Doyle,  
Nancy Carroll, Anne Dignam.*



*A section of the VSS North Club on the day the  
President Called*



*A section of the VSS North Club on the day the  
President Called*



# ROKE SCHEME

R MANY FUNCTIONS DURING THE YEAR



*Ester Murray, Maureen & Liam O'Rourke*



*Micheal Launders, Bridie Lyons, Eileen Girvin & right, Joan Russell*



*Kay McClorey, Kay Delaney, Micheal Launders, Eileen Girvin & Jim Lenehan in St. Endas park & museum - June '95*



*Paddy Duffy with wife Margaret "Up Dancing"*



*Kay Hammond & Fr. Joe Kennedy*



*Barbara Clarke, Stephen Kerr & Bernie in KilKeel Co. Down.*

# Rehabilitation After Stroke

**Dr. Angela McNamara, Rehabilitation Medicine Specialist ,  
National Rehabilitation Board, 25 Clyde Road Dublin 2**



Stroke is one of the major causes of death and disability in the developed world. Rehabilitation is an important part of its management, yet rehabilitation services are haphazard.

Some advances have been made in the area of prevention, most significant of which is the early diagnosis and treatment of hypertension. Atherosclerosis resulting in carotid artery disease also requires early diagnosis as surgical treatment can prevent an impending stroke taking place.

The consequence of severe stroke to the patient and family is well known. Rapidly advancing technology is focusing on more accurate diagnosis and treatment, and this is resulting in greater interest being directed towards rehabilitation and its outcome.

The main aim of rehabilitation is to enable stroke victims to reach their maximum level of function and live the best life possible within the limits imposed by their impairment. Institutional care is avoided if at all possible. For those who require full nursing care it is estimated that the cost for one person is in the region of £30,000 a year.

The yearly incidence of stroke is estimated at two in 1,000 of the population. Dublin, therefore, has more than 2,000 new stroke patients a year. As public health, medical and social advances continue to extend life expectancy, we can expect an increase in the size of the community at risk of stroke in the future. It is now and will continue to be a major public health issue requiring our increased and focused attention.

Some strokes are transient and full recovery will take place within 24 hours. Those with disability will be referred for rehabilitation. This is best done by a team of experts. The majority of patients survive but the outlook for each individual is variable. It is generally accepted that about one third will recover fully, one third will have some degree of impairment and disability and one third will be completely dependent.

Different models on the best way to manage stroke have been reported. Stroke units have been advocated in many countries. In Ireland such a development is difficult to develop in the present general hospital system, with such demands on the acute beds.



Angela McNamara, Sr. Bride Murphy, Vincent Keaverty

Local circumstances and constraints influence the design of rehabilitation services. A pragmatic approach is to ensure that good rehabilitation practice begins on the day of the stroke, regardless of where the patient is housed, and then appropriate patients are moved to a stroke rehabilitation unit as soon as possible thereafter.

In 1989 a Comprehensive Stroke Programme was introduced at St. Vincent's Hospital Dublin based on a model from the USA. It works satisfactorily and is possibly the best model for the public hospital service in Ireland.

Characteristic features of stroke programmes include

- 1) Co-ordinated multi-disciplinary team rehabilitation under the leadership of a Medical Consultant. There has been considerable debate about who should be responsible for leading the service and the consensus is that it should be a consultant who has appropriate knowledge and training and be enthusiastic about stroke rehabilitation.
- At St. Vincent's the team is co-chaired by consultants in both Geriatric Medicine and Rehabilitation Medicine.
- 2) Regular education and training of staff and carers
- 3) Specialist interest in stroke on the part of the professional staff involved.
- 4) Routine involvement of carers in the rehabilitation process.

St. Vincent's programme emphasises early intervention by a team of specialists from Medicine, Surgery, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Medical Social Work, Dietician and other specialists. The family and carers are also important participants in the rehabilitation of the patient. Working together the team aims to assist the stroke victims achieve their maximum potential as soon possible and avoid secondary complications.

Good rehabilitation depends on the implementation of some basic principles and these include a full evaluation of the patient's potential. The physician's role in assessment and treatment is crucial. It is important to remember that the effort involved in rehabilitation for the patient after a stroke can be compared to olympic effort for a normal person. Elderly patients may have a number of medical problems that are relevant. Their frailty and low effort tolerance will affect outcome. Treatment must begin early, be systematic, and built up in stages to include the types of treatment specific to the damage suffered.

Motivation is a major factor and may take some time to assess. Here the support of the family and carers is central. If motivation is poor rehabilitation measures may not succeed. Depression is a common feature and must be identified and treated.

Two-thirds of the patients with stroke are over age 60 and therefore the largest numbers fall into the older age group. Rehabilitation facilities for those who are over 65 are generally more developed in Ireland with a number of options for secondary rehabilitation available. For those who are younger the services are quite limited.

The National Rehabilitation Hospital in Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire is the main option. It is a large in-patient unit that offers comprehensive secondary rehabilitation. There is a great demand on the beds and some stroke victims wait a long time for admission. Frequently the individual will already have been discharged from the general hospital before gaining entry.

There are a number of out-patient facilities available, such as St. Anthony's in Herbert Avenue, that offer a limited service for stroke.

Major development is needed in the field of rehabilitation to bring services for stroke in line with other developed European countries.

A key deficiency is the almost complete absence of consultants in the speciality of rehabilitation medicine in the general hospitals in this country where the majority of stroke rehabilitation takes place.

Ireland is unique in Europe having a National Rehabilitation Board (NRB). This is a statutory authority responsible for rehabilitation. In the recent past the NRB suggested to the Minister for Health the need to look at Rehabilitation Medicine in this country. In 1993 Mr. Brendan Howlin, the then Minister, set up the "National Advisory Committee on Medical Rehabilitation" (NACMR). This has representatives from all the relevant specialities in medicine and surgery, as well as representatives from the Department of Health, Comhairle na n'Ospideál and the NRB. This committee is chaired by Professor Barry Bresnihan, St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin. One of its main roles is to undertake a detailed assessment of existing Medical Rehabilitation facilities throughout the Republic of Ireland. The report of this committee is due in the near future and it is hoped that any recommendations will be acted upon and that significant developments in the area of Rehabilitation Medicine will follow in the near future.

## References

- 1 Langhorne P. The Role of Stroke Units. *Irish Medical Journal (IMJ)* 1995; 88 No.5 150-151.
- 2 Mc Namara, Keating D., Rehabilitation after Stroke. *Irish Medical Journal (IMJ)* 1992; 85 No.4 122-123.
- 3 Stroke Units Trialists' Collaboration. What is a stroke Unit? A survey of the randomised trials. Proceedings of the British Geriatric Society Spring Meeting, Torquay, April 6-8 1995.



Ben Grant, in Kilkeel, Co. Down. Sept '95



# The Nurse And Stroke Rehabilitation

Bernadette Lee, SRN, National Rehabilitation Hospital, Rochestown Avenue, Dún Laoghaire.



Bernadette Lee

## Aims of Rehabilitation:

The aim is to maximise recovery and help the patient return to maximum independence. This can best be achieved when the patients and their families are involved with the team, Doctor, Nurses, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, Psychologists and Social Workers.

## Rehabilitation:

Problems associated with each stroke are identified. These may include

- Paralysis
- Communication problems
- Swallowing
- Urinary incontinence
- Mental and emotional problems
- Fatigue.

Short term realistic goals are set with the patient and his/her family and the Health Care team. The role of the family carers is crucial.

## Tips on Positioning

Good positioning of the stroke patient is most important.

## Positioning in bed.

(a) Lying on the stroke side (fig.1)



fig 1

This should be encouraged with the stroke shoulder well forward so that the body weight is supported on the flat of the shoulder blade and not on the point of the shoulder. Place the stroke leg with the thigh so that it is in line with the trunk, and bend the knee slightly. The unaffected leg should be brought forward and placed with the knee bent on a pillow in front of the affected leg for comfort. This prevents the patient rolling onto his back. Lastly, bend the head forward a little.

(b) Lying on the unaffected side (fig. 2)



fig 2

Again the stroke arm should be well forward, keeping the elbow straight and supported on a pillow. The stroke leg should be brought far enough in front of the body to prevent the patient rolling on to the back, the knee bent and leg supported on a pillow. A small pillow can then be placed under the patient's waist to maintain the line of the spine. When lying on the side position, the patient should have two pillows only under the head.

(c) Lying on the back (fig.3)



fig 3

This is the position most likely to encourage spasticity, but some patients do like to lie on their back for a while and it will be required for some treatments. Place two pillows under the patient's head and help him bend his head slightly towards his unaffected shoulder and gently turn his head towards his stroke side but do not use force. A small pillow is placed under the buttock of the stroke side and should extend just to the knee, this

will relax the leg and prevent it turning out at the hip. A pillow is placed under the stroke arm which is kept straight at the elbow and if possible, the palms of the hand facing upwards. The bed must be the correct height to promote independence and safety for the patient, family and Health Care workers.

Sitting position in a chair. (Fig 4)



The patient should sit upright – well back in the chair – and should not slump to one side. A table should be used to support the stroke arm which then rests on a pillow. The arm should be positioned with palm facing downwards, fingers and thumb straight and elbow straight. The stroke leg may need to be supported by a pillow beneath the buttock on the stroke side to prevent the knee rolling outwards and so keep the foot flat. The Occupational Therapist will advise on the appropriate type of chair for safety and independence.

### Incontinence

Nursing care will involve setting up a programme of regular toileting to promote continence. A chart or a diary may be useful. Sometimes drug treatment may be necessary. Restoration of continence can provide a tremendous psychological boost for patients and give them the confidence to participate in therapy and social events. Adequate fluid intake and the use of natural bran products and fibre-rich foods are important. A raised toilet seat and grab rails are essential for safety and independence.

### Nutrition

The nutritional problems that may arise following a stroke include :

- A limit on the patient's ability to feed himself
- Visual defects which may result in food being left on the plate because it has not been seen
- Inability to remember how to feed oneself
- Difficulty in swallowing.

### Communication

Great progress can be made here, especially in the early stages. Goals for working with the patient might be:

- Creating an atmosphere that encourages communication.
- Encouraging patients to express themselves – e.g. through writing or gestures.
- Use of picture or alphabet boards.

### Emotional Support.

The patient may experience:-

- Emotional lability which may result in him laughing or crying on the slightest pretext and often inappropriately
- Reduced tolerance to stress
- Fear, hostility, anger, frustration
- Withdrawal and isolation
- Depression.

The Nurse must be supportive by listening and providing a safe comfortable environment. It is important to work closely with the family to ensure they fully understand the nature of the problem.

### Discharge planning

The Nurse works closely with the Social Workers in getting the patient ready to leave the hospital. The process involves :-

- Early contact with the patients family so they can observe therapy, learn about stroke and the support services available such as the Volunteer Stroke Scheme, Home Help, Meals on Wheels. The new video on stroke will be a great help here.
- Assessing what are the patient's and the family goals for discharge.
- Evaluating what type of help and supervision will be required at home.
- Teaching the patient and his family about the use of assistive devices.
- Encouraging week-end leave or overnight stay at home to determine the patient's ability to function at home.
- Early ordering of equipment or adaptive devices to ensure their arrival before discharge.
- Making referral to the Community Care Services including the Public Health Nurse and the G.P.

### Conclusion

Finally for rehabilitation to be successful it must be a co-ordinated team effort involving patients and their families. The programme must be consistent with short term achievable goals. Morale is all important. Co-operation between nurses, other professionals and, above all, family carers ensures that the patient can look to the future with confidence. It is this confidence that gives stroke people the will to strive for ever higher levels of recovery.

## Westmeath Stroke Scheme

**Mary Mahon, Organiser of Westmeath Stroke Scheme, Ballincurra, Ballimore, Co. Westmeath.**

The last year, 1995, has been a very successful year for us here at the Westmeath Stroke Scheme.

We held three parties during the year, an Easter Get-together, Autumn Get-together and our Christmas party. All were well attended and eagerly looked forward to by our members and friends.

Our Easter party was held in "The Well" Moate, a lovely old Georgian house in its own grounds, beautifully landscaped and complete with a miniature golf course. We had a lovely meal and wonderful entertainment. Everybody was in great spirits and went home very happy, looking forward to our next outing. This took place in "The Rustic Inn" Abbeyshrule in August, again another lovely day. The sun shone all day. The food and entertainment were excellent as were the facilities for wheelchairs. Patricia, one of our members played the piano for the first time since her stroke two years earlier to the delight of all present. Our Christmas Party took place in the Bloomfield House Hotel, Mullingar, Santa paid a visit and distributed gifts to all.

Our two Clubs meet once each month. They each organise their own activities such as the Christmas Party, short outings to places of interest such as parks,



*Mid week break in Knock, Co. Mayo  
L-R Seated: Joe Quinn, Bill Fitzgibbons, Nancy Irwin, Mai Fitzgibbons, Matt Scally  
Standing: Lizzie Quinn partly hidden, Tom Irwin, Mary Mahon (org VSS), Vera Scally.*

lakes, garden centres and places of historical interest.

A mid-week break for four members and their carers took place in June to Knock Co. Mayo. This was both a spiritual and social treat for three days. We hope to take along another group during Summer 1996.

We would like to pay a special tribute to our volunteers who have helped out so faithfully over the years. Our members and their families fully appreciate the role of volunteers in improving the quality of their lives. A special word of thanks to the Red Cross who have helped us out with transport and personnel for members who are not able to board the bus.

Congratulations to Kathleen Dalton, Mullingar Club, on being chosen the most glamorous granny at the Tyrellspass Harvest Festival.

A word of thanks to our Church-gate collectors who do a fine job each year for us, also our Marathon Runners both ladies and gents who ran in the Dublin City Marathon to help finance our activities during the year.

We look forward to next year which will be our 10th Birthday in anticipation of bigger and better things.



*Southsiders enjoying themselves*



*Back Row L-R Mary Brown, Mary Clarke, Jane Kinsella  
Front L-R Imelda Gannon, Emer McGovern  
Northsiders Enjoying themselves*



# Money Matters

## John L'Estrange Reports

We had a good year on the financial front in 1995

The Eastern Health Board gave us £16,000 for 1995 – we express our grateful thanks.

A Table-Quiz was held in UCD Belfield on 6th March 1996. It was organised by a committee which included Anne Kelliher, Gerry Horkan, Terry Dolan and John L'Estrange. Irene Dixon acted as auctioneer and Gerry's sons, David and John, worked very hard keeping the teams up to date. The Mathematics Department won First Prize, while a team from Administration came second.

A highlight of the evening was a painting presented for auction by Maureen Belton (UCD retired). John L'Estrange spoke and thanked all those who attended. He made special mention of Terry Dolan – Chairperson of the Common Room – who acted as quizmaster and Irene Dixon for a very amusing evening in her role as auctioneer.

A wide range of commercial firms helped us once again, e.g. Banks, Building Societies, Insurance Companies, Manufacturing Firms and Retail outlets. We have listed below, in alphabetical order, the main companies who have helped us. We are grateful to them for their generosity

The principal companies who helped VSS in 1995 were:

Abbot Laboratories	ESB	National Irish Bank
Aer Rianta	Esso	New Ireland Assurance
Allied Irish Banks	Fitzwilton	Odlums
Amdahl Computers	Fyffes	Penneys
An Bord Bainne	Gallagher	PMPA
Arcon	General Accident	Quinnsworth
Arnotts	General Motor Distribution	Rhone-Poulenc
Bailey R A and Co.	Glaxo	Ireland Ltd
B&I Line	Glenalbyn House	Roches Stores
Bank of Ireland	Guinness	Royal Insurance
Becton Dickinson	Hoechst	RTE
Bristol-Myers Squibb Co.Ltd.	Iarnród Eireann	Ryans Hotel
Burmah-Castrol	IBM	Sealink
Bus Eireann	Irish Cement	Siemens
Calor Kosangas	Irish Distillers	Slender Health Club
Ciba-Geigy	Irish Life	Smurfits
Clerys	Irish Permanent Building Society	Stena Line
Clondalkin Group	Jet Oil	Stillorgan Bowling Club
Conrad Hotel	Jurys Hotel	Telecom Eireann
Courtyard Restaurant	Killiney Court Hotel	Ulster Bank
P. V. Doyle Hotels	Marks and Spencers	Unidare
Dunnes Stores	McCormacks	Wigoders
Erin Foods	Motorola	Zoological Gardens

## **Volunteer Stroke Scheme**

249 Crumlin Road  
Dublin 12

Phone: 01-4559036

Fax: 01-4557013

Registered Charity CHY 6989

### **Committee**

Chairperson: Anne Copeland  
Secretary: Theo Davis  
Treasurer: Anne Tuite  
Liaison Officer: Joan Monahan

Members: John Annesley  
John L'Estrange  
Olive Loughran  
Bride Murphy

### **Editorial Committee:**

John L'Estrange (Editor)  
Michael McGinley

### **Supervisors:**

Eileen Murtagh 01 - 4519807  
Erica O'Mara 01 - 8481059

## **Aims of the Volunteer Stroke Scheme**

- 1 To help people who suffer from speech and allied problems as a result of a stroke.
- 2 To offer each patient a volunteer who will visit singly for about an hour at a time on a regular weekly basis.
- 3 To provide a club where patients can meet and be further helped.
- 4 To provide outings from time to time.
- 5 To create a greater awareness and understanding of stroke through effective and relevant publicity.

**Subscription £5.00 a year**

VSS News is distributed to hospitals and Health Boards throughout the country free of charge. Organisations requiring copies of VSS News please contact:

The Editor  
249 Crumlin Road,  
Dublin 12  
phone 01-4559036,

between 10.00 am and 12.30 pm on  
Monday, Wednesday or Thursday.

More **volunteers** and **drivers** are required by the VSS. Contact us at the number given above or write for further information.

I wish to subscribe to the Volunteer Stroke Scheme and I enclose £5.00 for 1996.

Name: .....

Address: .....

Phone: .....

Cheques should be made payable to the Volunteer Stroke Scheme.

Signed: .....

Date: .....