

**VSS**  
**Volunteer**  
**Stroke**  
**Scheme**

# News

Issue 19 July 2004

## **Acute Stroke Units :**

**Achieving the best hospital care for Irish stroke sufferers**

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Importance  
of Education**

***This  
Ability***



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with the  
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Front Cover (Page 1) :  
Pat, Irene & Phyllis.  
Photo: Bridie Lyons.

# The Importance of Education



**Anne Copeland**

**C**urrently Stroke is the third leading cause of death throughout Europe.

In addition to causing death it is the second leading cause of neurological disability. This means survivors place enormous financial burden on health care resources coupled with the emotional and social burden on family members.

Governments must take a more pro-active approach to stroke prevention. Proven preventative treatments are available. A major health education and stroke prevention strategy needs to be put in place. The public must be made aware of how guarding against or treating conditions such as obesity, diabetes and blood pressure can play a major role in preventing stroke.

The predicted increase in the number of people with diabetes in the future will contribute to an increase in cardiovascular disease. Health education is the key to long term prevention. Inaction in treating risk factors will increase the burden of stroke and disability and, will lead to loss of quality of life and increased cost of long term care.

Through a public information campaign the public could be made much more aware of the risk factors and called to be more responsible in their own response through diet and exercise. People should also be made aware that medical interventions such as screening is available. This is particularly important for people who have a hereditary risk of stroke. Prior to the smoking ban the Government ran a very effective advertising campaign showing the effects of smoking on health. In North America this type of campaign is on going in relation to stroke prevention.

## The Smoking Ban

The public are constantly reminded of what health checks are needed to help reduce their stroke risk. The smoking ban has shown how effective a campaign can be when the government throws its full weight behind it. Lack of spending on stroke prevention is false economy. The cost of stroke rehabilitation is enormous and the cost to a persons quality of life is unquantifiable. Governments should not have to introduce legislation to protect people against such conditions as obesity. We do not want to live in a 'nanny state'. However, Governments do have responsibility through its education systems to educate people to take personal responsibility for their own health. Its even more important that when they need preventative screening and other medical interventions that it is available to them regardless of income.

# This Ability

**J**ean Murphy joined the Volunteer Stroke Club in September 2001, eighteen months after suffering a severe stroke. Although her side was paralysed she could, and still can walk a little with the aid of a stick or a tripod.

The first day she attended the Monday Club she was so surprised that the other patients there were not old as she had anticipated, but many were in her own age bracket - in the mid fifties and early sixties. When she got home she wrote a poem about this, and she has chosen that poem to open the book - 'First Day Nerves'.

The following February they (the members) had dinner out and had the annual Poetry Competition to celebrate Valentines Day. This prompted her to collect the pieces of writings, and for the members to continue with creative writing as a craft at the club.

The Volunteer Stroke Club has helped her go forward and take part in hobbies, crafts, drama and outings with everyone else affected by stroke. They have fun and laughter together with our wonderful devoted volunteers and drivers.

There is life after stroke.

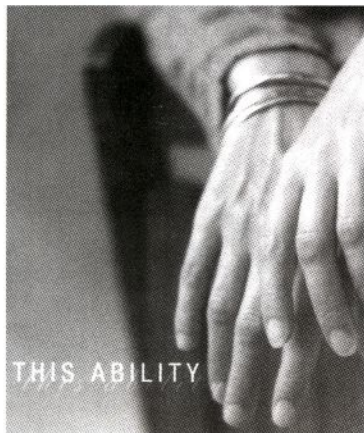
*'This Ability' is Edited by Jean Murphy and is on sale*

**Price €5.00**

Available from The Northside Stroke Club  
c/o The Volunteer Stroke Scheme, 249 Crumlin Road, Dublin 12.  
Tel: 01 4559036 Fax: 01 4557013

The Northside Stroke Club gratefully acknowledges the  
sponsorship received from  
The National Lottery, Department of Health and Children,  
Hawkins House, Dublin 2...

Email: [vss@iolfree.ie](mailto:vss@iolfree.ie) Website: [strokescheme.ie](http://strokescheme.ie)



## Giving up Smoking?

**N**ow is the time to give up Smoking for at least a month. The VSS along with Health Action Overseas have launched a Sponsorship Card to help you do it.

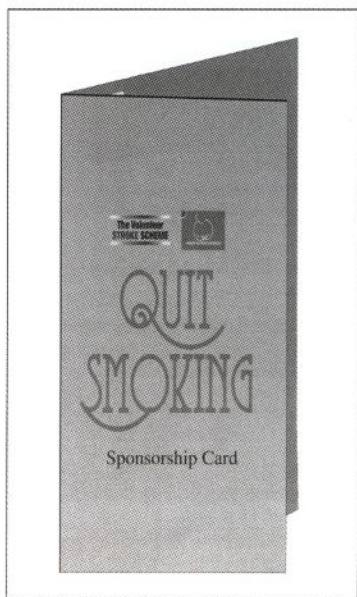
Primarily, what you do is to get sponsors to fill in the card bring it to any Bank of Ireland branch and lodge to The VSS and Health Action Overseas jointly and you'll be helping us.

Account No: 91858132 Sort code: 90 - 12 - 12.

Sponsorship Cards are available from:

The Volunteer Stroke Scheme  
249 Crumlin Road,  
Dublin 12.

Phone: 01 - 455 9036 Fax: 01 - 455 7013





# Acute Stroke Units : Achieving the best hospital care for Irish stroke sufferers

By Dr Peter Kelly, MD, MS, MRCPI,  
Consultant Neurologist, Stroke Service and Department of Neurology,  
Mater University Hospital, Dublin.

**I**n the last 10 years, it has become recognized that patients with acute stroke may achieve improved recovery if they are treated in an Acute Stroke Unit following their admission to hospital.

This has led to the introduction of Stroke Units in many countries in Europe and other parts of the developed world, similar to the widespread introduction of acute Coronary Care Units in the 1970s.

Unlike similar developments in some other fields of medical care, the effect of Stroke Unit care has been carefully studied in clinical trials. Recently the UK-based Cochrane collaborative group analysed the results of 22 separate studies of Stroke Unit care. Compared to care on a General Medical Ward, these studies indicated that Stroke Unit care reduced the chance of death or serious disability following stroke by 22%, and reduced the likelihood of death following stroke by 16%. The likelihood of these figures being due to a chance finding was less than 1 in 1,000, indicating that proof of the benefits of Stroke Units had been established with a high degree of scientific accuracy.

The size of these benefits are about the same as can reasonably be expected from the introduction of a new medical intervention (eg. a drug) for stroke patients. However, unlike some drugs, which can only benefit a small number of selected patients with stroke, the benefits of Stroke Unit care may be gained by most patients admitted to hospital with acute Stroke. Therefore, the large-scale impact of Stroke Unit care on mortality, disability, and reduction of hospital costs is likely to be substantial.

## Types of Stroke Units:

Two main types of Stroke Units have been developed in Europe and North America. Acute Stroke Units focus on treatment of patients in the immediate hours and days following their stroke, with the aim of identifying the cause of stroke, starting appropriate medical treatments, and beginning early rehabilitation. By their nature, Acute Stroke Units are based in acute medical hospitals.

Stroke Rehabilitation Units focus on providing intensive inpatient rehabilitation for weeks or months, after the acute medical treatments and assessments have been completed. The patient is kept in a hospital setting so that they can have high-intensity rehabilitation after the acute medical concerns have been stabilized. In many European countries and the USA, these Rehabilitation Units are based in specialised rehabilitation hospitals. "Fast-track" admission systems are often set up between acute hospitals and off-site Stroke Rehabilitation Units. These allow a patient to bypass the Casualty Department and be reassessed in the acute hospital without delay if the need arises. Unfortunately, hospital and community rehabilitation services remain under-developed in Ireland, so that many Irish patients with stroke remain in acute general hospitals for prolonged periods.

## Goals of Stroke Unit care:

The principle behind Stroke Unit care is straightforward. The goal is to treat patients in the early hours and days following their stroke in a specialised area within the hospital, where they are assessed and treated by staff with special expertise in Stroke management.

Patients are cared for by a multidisciplinary team who work closely together, and are skilled in all aspects of care of patients with stroke. The team is usually led by a Consultant Stroke Physician, and includes trainee Hospital Doctors, trained Nurses, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, a Nutritionist, and a Medical Social Worker.

## Table 1: Main types of Stroke

**Ischaemic Stroke:** Caused by blockage of a blood vessel to the brain, usually by a blood clot (thrombosis or embolism)

**Intracerebral Haemorrhage:** Bleeding into the brain, usually caused by rupture of the wall of a small artery inside the brain

**Subarachnoid Haemorrhage:** Bleeding on the surface of the brain, usually caused by rupture of a medium-sized artery at the base of the brain

Specialist medical care in this crucial early period is important to establish the cause of the stroke, and take measures to prevent an early recurrence. A brain scan (CT or MRI) is performed to gather information about the type of stroke (Table 1) and exclude other conditions such as brain infections and tumours. This provides essential information to direct further treatment. Often, evaluations of the heart are performed such as blood testing, cardiac ultrasound and cardiac rhythm monitoring (Table 2). Many patients are started on antithrombotic medications (blood thinners), such as aspirin, warfarin, or sometimes intravenous heparin. Some patients benefit from early surgical treatments such as aneurysm clipping (for subarachnoid haemorrhage) or carotid endarterectomy (for stroke due to narrowing of the carotid artery). Medical treatment is usually begun to limit the size of the stroke, and to anticipate and prevent common complica-

tions, such as oedema (brain swelling), haemorrhagic conversion (bleeding into the stroke), pneumonia, urinary sepsis (bladder infections) and life-threatening blood clots in the legs and lungs (venous thrombosis).

Each component of the team has an important contribution to improving the overall outcome of the patient. Skilled nursing care is essential for neurological observation of acutely-ill patients with severe stroke, preventing skin complications such as pressure

immobility and promotes recovery of strength and function. Prompt evaluation by a Speech and Language therapist frequently prevents pneumonia due to spillage of food into the airways in patients whose cough reflex has been weakened following their stroke. Language rehabilitation is also essential for patients whose stroke has resulted in language impairment (aphasia). For patients with severe stroke which has affected their ability to swallow food and liquids, early evaluation by a Nutritionist is important to prevent malnutrition, which can predispose to serious infections and prevent effective rehabilitation.

## **The Mater University Hospital Acute Stroke Unit:**

At the Mater Hospital in Dublin, an Acute Stroke Unit was established in 2002. The Unit currently comprises a protected 6-bedded ward, with anticipated expansion to two wards in July 2004. The Unit has its own rehabilitation gym and equipment, separate from the main rehabilitation departments in the hospital. Computer monitors for viewing brain CT and MRI scans are available so that the medical team do not have to travel to the Xray department to review scans.

The Unit is led jointly by Consultant Neurologists and Consultants in Medicine for the Elderly at the Mater. Dedicated nursing staff, a Clinical Nurse Specialist, Physiotherapists, an Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist, Nutritionist, and Medical Social Worker comprise the multidisciplinary team. An Acute Stroke team assesses patients in the Accident and Emergency Department. CT brain scan is performed, and patients are directly admitted to the Stroke Unit from A+E or following a brief stay in the Acute Medical Unit. After acute medical treatment and evaluation is complete, younger patients (under 65 years) are discharged from the Unit to home, or to continued rehabilitation under the care of the Neurology service,

while older patients (over 65) will have continued rehabilitation under the care of the Medicine for the Elderly service.

Coordinated care is achieved by a weekly team meeting, and weekly joint medical Stroke Unit rounds by the Neurology and Medicine for Elderly teams. Following discharge, continuous care is provided by follow-up at the hospital Stroke Prevention Clinic, in close cooperation with the General Practitioner and community services. To increase the capacity of the Unit to admit patients who are medically-unstable following their stroke, an off-site Stroke Rehabilitation Unit is being developed. A pilot programme is operated with the Stroke Volunteer Group, who visit patients in the Unit to assist with the transition back to the community following discharge.

## **Stroke Units in Ireland:**

The Stroke Council of the Irish Heart Foundation has recommended that all Irish hospitals who admit patients with acute stroke develop Stroke Units, led by a trained Stroke Physician (Consultant Neurologist or Geriatrician). While the format of these Units may vary according to local hospital needs, they all share the key requirements of a dedicated area within the hospital, trained nursing and rehabilitation staff, and access to brain imaging (usually CT scan) and other support services.

Unfortunately, very few acute hospitals in Ireland have developed Stroke Units to date. For hospitals in large population centers, the combined approach (Neurology/Medicine for Elderly) which we have operated successfully at the Mater offers an efficient model to provide a high quality of care for stroke patients comparable to international best practice in an Irish setting. For regional or local hospitals, smaller Units may be feasible. Regardless of the exact format, the widespread introduction of Stroke Units should be a priority to provide the highest standards of hospital care for all patients with stroke in Ireland in the future.

## **Table 2: Common hospital tests after stroke:**

Not all patients will have all of the following. They are chosen, depending on the individual situation.

Brain scan (CT or MRI): To establish the type of stroke (see Table 1 above)

Neck artery studies (ultrasound or MRI): To investigate for narrowing of the carotid arteries in the neck

Heart studies (ECG, 24-hour heart monitor, cardiac ultrasound): To investigate for sources of blood clot in the heart which may travel to the brain and block a brain artery

Blood tests (cholesterol, blood sugar, heart enzymes): To investigate for risk factors for stroke such as silent heart attack, high cholesterol, diabetes

Videofluoroscopy (swallowing Xray): To examine whether food is spilling into the airways due to weakness of the swallowing reflex after stroke

ulceration, preventing incontinence, managing behavioural problems, and counselling the patient and family members. Early rehabilitation (physiotherapy and occupational therapy) prevents medical complications of



Table Quiz winners: Mick McNamara, Pauline McNamara, and John Kelly with Gerry McNamara and Bridie Lyons.



Mini Marathon 2003: Bridie Lyons with sisters, Trish, Kathleen, Eileen, Tessie and sister-in-law, Tina & Eileen Murtagh.



# Southside

**Bridie Lyons, South Dublin Supervisor**

**V**oluntary work is an important contribution to national life. It meets needs within the community and helps to develop and reinforce social networks and cohesion. Doing voluntary work is an excellent way of helping other people as well as benefiting oneself.

Helping others also benefits the volunteer by providing valuable experience, which is often not easily gained elsewhere, and by helping to develop new skills. Recovering from a stroke is a long, hard road, but the Volunteer Stroke Scheme is here to help every step of the way with the assistance of volunteers who play a vital role in the continual work of the VSS, giving willingly of their time services and skills. The clubs play an important part in the rehabilitation of stroke patients by providing:

- A place for people with similar problems following stroke to meet and empathise
- A place for receiving information help and support
- A place to have a cup of tea and relax
- A place for fun games and celebrations
- A place to develop talents and discover new ones

This past year Taney and Mount Argus Clubs were busy places as usual - with table quizzes, cards and board games, darts, dominoes, painting, flower arranging, information sessions, physiotherapy sessions (under the guidance of Afric Morrissey) and outings. With the acquisition of a laptop, computer training has begun with some of our members. All these activities are very therapeutic and help to restore the confidence and build up the strength of members. The clubs are happy cheerful places and it is quite obvious that maintaining a sense of humour is an all-important part of rehabilitation following stroke - the members and volunteers certainly do just that.



*A Day out at Bettystown: Theresa, Nuala and Barbara.*



*Helen, Pat and Michael at the Garden Party.*



*Patti, Rose, Hugh, Carmel and Kay.*



*Marie and Friend at the Garden Party.*

# ***moving with the times***

Airfield Trust Dundrum was a popular venue for lunch on a few occasions by Taney club.

The annual garden party in my house on June 11th was again a successful occasion attended by members of both clubs. On 3rd July Marie and Shay O'Brien provided the venue yet again for a most enjoyable garden party. Shay who, sadly, has since passed away was as usual the perfect host, not just helping Marie with the catering, but also getting the party going by leading the sing-song.

The year was rounded off with an outing to the Neptune Beach Hotel Bettystown on 24th July before the clubs closed for the month of August. From 21st to 24th September 30 members and volunteers went on holiday to Flannerys Hotel Galway. It was a great success in spite of one of our members having to return home on Tuesday due to illness. We enjoyed a tour of Galway



*Bridie Lyons*

City and cathedral and Royal Tara China on Monday. On Tuesday a planned visit to Kylemore Abbey got as far as Maam Cross due the coach breaking down. The weather was beautiful and our journey home on Wednesday was broken by a very pleasant stop at Locke's Distillery Kilbeggan for lunch.

The annual Christmas party was held in the Coach House Ballinteer on 11th December. This was once more a most enjoyable event - a delicious Christmas dinner was served by pleasant helpful staff. Local shops in Kimmage and Dundrum provided lots of prizes for the raffle.

The table quiz in the Coach House on 11th February was good fun as well as being a financial rewarding event. It was well supported by families and friends of members and volunteers.

Many thanks to all whom participated in the ladies Mini Marathon and to the collectors of sponsorship cards.

To all members and volunteers thank you for all your support and dedication during the past year.

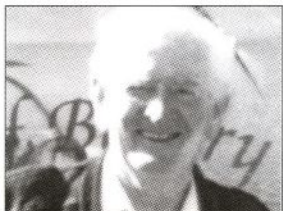
I would like to remember Horst Babel - a member of Mt Argus Club who died on Christmas Day.

## **A Tribute to Shay O'Brien**

**O**n October 23rd 2003 the death of Shay O'Brien occurred.

Shay worked tirelessly as a volunteer with the VSS for many years, starting off when Marie, his widow was supervisor of Mount Argus club. After Marie handed over the reins Shay continued as a volunteer- supporting Eileen, my predecessor and myself in every way he could.

Shay encapsulated what volunteering is all about. His kindness, good humour, discretion and above all his respect and



encouragement for all members was remarkable. He had a great heart and gave of his time willingly, even after club hours when necessary.

Each year Marie and Shay hosted a garden party for the Strokes Clubs. They welcomed us into their lovely home, wine, dined and entertained us and

although Shay himself was not a drinker he made sure that those who like a drop of the hard stuff was amply satisfied on that day.

Shay was an ace card player, however the cards brought out another side of him, and if you were to make a mistake during play, (especially if you were his partner) the frown or little comment was enough to send shivers down your spine.

Shay was a great man, a great family man and a great friend to all.

We miss Shay in Club but his memory will live on in the VSS for a long time to come.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam.



# Around th



*Holidays 2003.*



*Eileen, Tom and Kitty.*



*Kay, Patti and Peggy.*



*Garden Party, Ballinteer.*



*Teresa and Hugh.*



*George and Connie.*



*Claire and Matt.*



*Horst, Des and Pat.*



*Holidays 2003.*



*Helen, Helen and Claire.*



*Vera, Gerry, Ita and Mairead.*



*Bettystown.*



*Nuala, Teresa, Alex and Paddy.*



# e Clubs



*Jean Murphy  
with the  
booklet 'THIS  
ABILITY'  
16/3/04.*



*Cutting the Cake, Wednesday Club, November 2003 .*



*Christmas Party, 2003.*



*Terry, John and Paul.*



*Club Panto 'Red Riding Hood's Birthday'.*



*Maureen and Maeve, Club Person of the Year.*



*Frank, Paddy and Noel.*

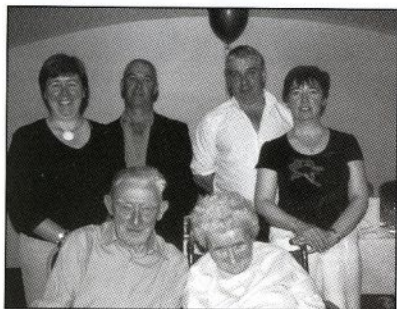


*L to R Bob, Steve, Noel, Jim and Kit.*



# News from the Midlands

**Mary Mahon**



*John & Mai and family at their little celebration.*



*L-R. Billy Connerton (Helper) with Mary and John McManus at the Christmas Party.*



*L-R. Joe Elliott, Joe Green, John Carty and Tom Slevin of Drumraney Club at the Christmas Party in The Bloomfield House Hotel, Mullingar.*

**T**he year 2003 has been very busy and successful year for our organisation, our two parties during the year at Easter and Christmas were well attended and enjoyed by all.

We had our annual trip to Knock in June for one week, we had twenty patients and three Carers a lovely break for all and the weather was quite pleasant, and everyone enjoyed their time there.

Here great relationships are made and contact is kept up exchanging photographs of the trip, Cards at Christmas time and many phone calls to each other during the year which is great to give them a lift; shared experiences are the building blocks of new friendships.

At our Christmas Party we had guests from Sligo who are about to set up their own Committee, they were impressed with the afternoon and got some ideas on the format and procedure. We wish them well and hope everything goes well for them. Santa paid us a visit with lots of goodies in his sack.

We had a Six Mile Sponsored Walk in May to raise funds also our annual Churchgate Collection which is our main source of income for the year. We are indebted to our generous contributors and our loyal collectors who do this chore for us each year.

Our two Clubs, Mullingar and Drumraney are both doing well, very active with their own agenda. The game of Bingo goes down very well, the silence is something else all heads down in anticipation of a check, for all our new members its something they have not played, but they learn it very fast and the competition is very keen, the cup of tea and Raffle follow.

We extend our congratulations to John and Mai Daly who celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary during the year we wish them many more years of happiness.

As we look back on 2003 as being a good year in many ways we look forward to 2004 with the same dedication and commitment to the organisation.



*John and Mai Daly on the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary.*



## Off the Juice

**P**atients taking the Anti-clotting drug Warfarin have been warned to avoid drinking cranberry juice.

The Committee on Safety of Medicines (U.K.) CSM is concerned that mixing the two increases the risk of haemorrhage. It has had eight reports of patients apparently affected by the combination.

A spokesman said: "The risks of a possible interaction between warfarin and Cranberry juice are fairly well known and warnings have been sent to prescribers. Until suitable research has been conducted, the CSM advises that patients taking warfarin should limit intake or avoid drinking cranberry Juice.

Cranberry juice is often used by women to prevent cystitis.

*Patients can get more information through the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency website at*

*www.mhra.gov.uk. This gives details of interactions between herbal remedies and prescription medicines. Warfarin product information also gives details regarding the risk of side effects.*

*Reproduced from "Take a Break" Magazine.*

## North West Stroke Group

Belalp, Carraroe, Co.Sligo.

**By Michael Mulvaney - Sec.**  
**Tel: (071) 9165526**

**Ed Blake - Chairperson**  
**Tel: (071) 9160368**

**I**n late 2003 the North West Health Board set up a Working Group of people, who had been directly impacted from the onset of a stroke and their carers.

The brief of the Group was to report on the Feasibility of setting up a Stroke Support Group here in the North West. In December 2004 the Group presented a full report to a wide audience, which included healthcare professionals, stroke patients, carers, and social workers active in the area. The report recommended the setting up of a support group as its main finding. A Committee was elected on the night, and is now actively engaged in providing support for those who have been affected by a stroke.

To date we have a held monthly meeting in our local Community center. These have focused on people getting to know each other and establishing the specific needs of the members. All attending have been very positive in their response to the ideas and presentations we have had so far. I suppose one could say we are finding our feet so far but the indications are good for the future of the group.

It is opportune now too, to acknowledge the generous help and assistance we have received in these early days from the VSS group itself, Bridie Lyons of the Dublin South Side Group, Mary Mahon Westmeath and those two wonderful ladies in Drumraney, Nancy Cunningham and Lena Warde, who were all so kind to us in our fact finding missions.

Of course now that we are in the start up phase the focus too is on the age-old subject of funding. All the usual agencies are being targeted but first thanks to the NWHB who were generous in their start up grant for us. We have also targeted the Mini Marathon and will have runners and walkers participating on the day. Other fundraising activities are also in the pot.

Now that the long hot days of Summer have finally arrived we have an outing planned for June to the local Folk park with plans for July to head for one of the many spots by the sea here in the North West.

Early days as I say but the support is there from many areas, and we will hope to build on that in the coming months. If anyone is visiting this way please contact myself or Michael and we would only be too glad to share experiences and show you some of the magnificent scenery we have here in the North West.



At Betystown: Phyllis, Connie & Ita.



Eileen Gírvan with Kitty & Tom Quinn.



Anne Copeland and Jean Murphy at the launch of the booklet 'THIS ABILITY'.



Birthday Cake for the Wednesday Club, October 2003.



Tess at the wheel of the coach in Galway, September 2003.



Coffee morning in Marie Kearns House, August 2003.

## Northside Stroke Clubs

# Dedications

Erica O'Mara,  
North Dublin Supervisor



**T**his article reads like a list of celebrations, which in a way it is but behind it all there is a lot of hard work on the part of each stroke person - getting up early and being ready for the driver to doing 35 minutes of physiotherapy every fortnight. So celebrations are well merited and very much enjoyed.

The first one as always was in the Monday Club - this year our 17th and celebrated as always with cake, candles and goodies and two chosen Club People of the year - this year being Jean Murphy and Albert Keegan.

## Our Galway

**O**n Sunday 21st September the Northside Clubs set off on their PAB Coach holiday. First stop Crumlin where we were reunited with the Southside Clubs. After we had greeted familiar friends we got acquainted with the new ones.

Our destination was Flannerys Hotel in Galway City having stopped for lunch in the lovely little town of Moate. We settled into Flannery's very quickly and after a short rest we went for dinner and then relaxed in the bar lounge for the evening where there was wonderful musical entertainment. Next morning completely revived and well fed we were off on an orientation tour visiting the new Cathedral, Spanish Arch, Eyre Square and the beautiful Galway Bay, enjoying the information relayed to us by the professional tour guide who made it all so interesting.

After another lovely dinner we again relaxed in the bar lounge and enjoyed the excellent cabaret. When Elvis



# and Celebrations

Before taking our Summer break we had our Summer Outing - once more to the Bracken Court Hotel in Balbriggan who us treated royally as before.

Back to Club in September and onto November with another Birthday for Wednesday Club, this time with Maeve Walsh and John Burgess the recipients of Club Person of the Year trophies and a large Birthday Cake from Superquinn as usual.

Christmas was soon with us and we booked our Christmas Party into the Maples Hotel where we enjoyed our meal and staged a Pantomime afterwards "Little Red Riding Hood's Birthday Party" incorporating other Panto characters - being a real farce providing much laughter. A monster Raffle was organised by the volunteers who sold and folded tickets the final act being Santa Claus ably portrayed by Kit Dooley.

Our thanks go to all our volunteers, both new and not so new and to Sr. Margaret and her staff, to the Northside People who run our ads for drivers and to Superquinn for all the biscuits and birthday cakes.

Is go mbeirimid beo ar an am seo arís!



*A Day out at Bettystown: George, Connie & Phyllis.*



*The Oldest Swinger in Town.*

## Trip By Volunteer Tess Harrington

decided to rise from the dead in the shape of Steve Cummins in full costume to belt out all our favourites we all agreed it was a magical night.

Day three dawned bright and sunny and we headed for Connemara via Kylemore Abbey, however our good luck ran out and our bus broke down.

Steve kept us in jokes and song until another bus came to Maam Cross and we had lunch in the "Peacock" Hotel with some time to kill to wait for another bus. There was a cottage which was a replica of the one in the film "The Quiet Man" with dummy figures of the cast. En route for our hotel we stopped at the "Royal Tara China" factory where money changed hands and boldly I asked if they would like to donate a prize for our evening's quiz. She offered me a beautiful vase which I was delighted to accept.

The quiz took place amid laughter and protests, the proud winners were from the Northside - captained by John Burgess with Tom McCahey Tom Fitzpatrick and Steve Cummins.

After a hearty breakfast and a good nights sleep we bid farewell to the staff of Flannery's who had been so kind to us, and returned home bidding farewell to our friends in the Southside Clubs and taking memories back home with us.



## Christmas Cards






**6 Christmas Cards + Envelopes**  
**per pack €5.00 plus Postage & Packaging.**

Contact the Honorary Secretary, Theo Davis -  
 Telephone: 01 - 455 9036  
 (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday mornings.)  
 or our Website [www.strokeschemc.ie](http://www.strokeschemc.ie)  
 Email: [tvs@iol.ie](mailto:tvs@iol.ie)





**On Sale Now!**

# News from Theo's

**Theo Davis, Honorary Secretary**

**D**uring the past year the office has been extremely busy. There was a steady request for guidance and information from both stroke patients and their carers along with referrals from Physiotherapists, Speech & Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers and Public Health Nurses.

Twenty years ago when I first manned the office for the VSS it was for 6 hours per week just dealing with phone queries. I was always very taken with the hands on approach of the scheme. I feel it would be a very great shame if modern day thinking were to over-

shadow or even do away with this way of running the clubs etc. The needs of the stroke patient should always take priority and all monies received and raised should be used to administer to their needs and administration costs should only be a minute part of running things.

Over the years we have grown from one to two and now four clubs in the Dublin area with a capacity to deal with 120 stroke patients a week. This service gives respite for both stroke patients and their families, and the therapeutic activities engaged in at the clubs are relevant and very helpful to those who have suffered a stroke. The rapport and comradeship at the clubs gives weight to the fact that our clubs do serve a very necessary purpose. It was very heartening while clearing out the files at the start of 2004, to come across so many letters from grateful clients and families of clients who had passed through the clubs or availed of our information and support

during their traumatic time of rehabilitation. Insurance costs have risen steeply over the last 3 years. Postage and increase in mobile phone use have all added to the extra cost of running the VSS.

During the last year, we have had very intense meetings with a representative of the SWAHB who are responsible for passing our grant allocation. We have had a shortfall amounting to €7,000.00 in 2002, and to date have only received €25,000.00 for 2003 instead of €31,000.00 which we expected and presently are anxiously awaiting word of our allotment for 2004. The activities of the VSS were thoroughly scrutinized with visits to both our clubs in Taney and Mt. Argus and separate individual meetings were held with our Chairperson, Anne Copeland and myself with Ms. Margaret Fitzpatrick, Manager of the Disability Service in the SWAHB. At present it is all up in the air but hopeful-

## Recommended Reading

### After Stroke

By David M. Hinds Published by Thorsons

### Stroke!

A Self - Help Guide.

By Dr. R. M. Youngson Published by David & Charles.

### Return to Ithaga

By Barbara Newborn Published by Element.

### Who Cares?

A guide for all who cares for others.

By Catherine McCann Published by Columbia Press.

### Stroke

A practical Guide towards recovery.

By Richard Langton Hewer & Derick T. Wade.

### Depression

The Common Sense Approach.

By Dr. Tony Bates.

### A Stroke

in the family. Published by The Stroke Association (British).

Out of Print - Try Local Library.

[www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

### My Year Off

By Robert McCrum.

### Stroke

at your fingertips.

By Anthony Rodd, Penny

Irwin & Bried Penhale

Published by Class

Publishing.

### Whose hand is this?

By Rosalie Leaney.





# Office

ly we will be able to continue with the services offered by the VSS even if it means more intensive fundraising.

From the onset, one of the primary aims of the VSS, was to provide a hands on, nurturing, supportive, community like environment that meets the needs of each individual who has had a stroke. The VSS exists for people and is about people caring about people. It is my hope, that with all the support of our loyal and hardworking volunteers, the VSS will survive for many years to come, and we will continue to serve stroke patients and their families by helping them to cope with the trauma of this most disruptive and frightening life experience that they have had to endure.

My sincere thanks to everyone who helps the VSS in any way.

Theo Davis.  
Hon. Secretary.



*These books have proved very helpful to stroke patients and their families and are very well written.*

**Anyone having difficulty tracing these books should contact the Honorary Secretary, Theo Davis -**  
**Telephone: 01 - 455 9036 (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday mornings.) or our Website [www.strokescheme.ie](http://www.strokescheme.ie) Email: [vss@iolfree.ie](mailto:vss@iolfree.ie)**

# Money Matters

## John L'Estrange Reports

Once again we had a good year on the financial front in 2003.

The Eastern Regional Health Authority gave us €25,000 for 2003. The VSS is most grateful to the Authority for its continuing support.

A Table Quiz was run by Bridie Lyons in the Coach House, Ballinteer, it went extremely well and raised €1,895.00.

Nuala Brennan did great work getting donations and prizes for the raffle.

We thank the National Lottery for the respite grant of €4,000 and for a grant of €3,000 for 2 Laptops.

We would like to take this opportunity thank Mr. Mike Glynn C.E.O. of Brainwave and all his staff for affording the V.S.S. office space and being so helpful to Theo our secretary. We look forward to our continued association with them.

Over the years' a wide range of commercial firms helped us 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 in the past.

We are grateful to them for their generosity.

- Abbot Laboratories
- Aer Rianta
- Allied Irish Banks
- Amdahl Computers
- Aventis Marketing
- Baileys Irish Cream
- Bank of Ireland
- Becton Dickinson
- Bristol Myers Squibb Co.
- Burmagh-Castrol
- Bus Eireann
- Calor Kosangas
- Cassidy Wine
- Conways Pub
- ESB
- Fitzpatrick Castle Hotel
- Fitzwillton
- Fyffes
- Glaxo Smith Kline
- Grange Pub
- Guinness
- Heineken
- Iarnrod Eireann
- IBM
- Irish Cement
- Irish Distillers
- Irish Life
- Jet Oil

- Killiney Court Hotel
- Marks and Spencers
- McCormacks
- New Island
- Novartis
- Odlums
- O'Neill Bros.
- Prudential Insurance Co.
- Quinnsworth
- Rhone - Poulenc Rorert
- Roches Stores
- Royal Insurance
- Smurfits
- Stena Line
- Woodchester Investment
- Zoological Gardens



# 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.

## Volunteer Stroke Scheme

249 Crumlin Road,  
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Phone: 01 - 4559036  
Fax : 01 - 4557013

## Patrons:

Dr. Morgan Crowe  
Dr. Mark Delargy  
Mr. Vincent Keaveney  
Dr. Angela McNamara

## Committee:

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

## Members:

Gerald Keogh  
John L' Estrange  
Bride Murphy  
Rose O'Gorman  
Nuala Brennan  
Alex Tuohy

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01 - 8481059

## Website:

[www.strokescheme.ie](http://www.strokescheme.ie)

## Email:

[vss@iolfree.ie](mailto:vss@iolfree.ie)

**Subscription €20.00 a year**

This issue of VSS News has been typeset by Alex Tuohy.  
Alex, a long time activist in VSS, has had a stroke himself, and is a member of the Committee of VSS.

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 €20.00 for 2004.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Phone.....

Cheques should be made payable to the Volunteer Stroke Scheme.

Signed.....

Date .....