

VSS
Volunteer
Stroke
Scheme

News

Issue 20 July 2005

Understanding Stroke

**North
West
Stroke
Club**

**All Kinds of
Everything**

**Midland
News**



**Stroke
Prevention
Booklet**

**Avoiding a first
or a second
Stroke**

**It's a
Date**

Southside News and Views

**Balance Problems
Explained**

Around the Clubs

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*Front Cover:
Patty, Brigid, Rose and
Irene at the Garden Party
in Ballinleer.*

Understanding Stroke

Anne Copeland

Stroke is a terrible burden on the patient, their families and on society. Few people still know about stroke believing that it is a disease of old age. They carry a fatalistic attitude to it believing that it is almost unavoidable. It is clear that stroke organisations have a major task in changing attitudes to the disease.

Last year with funding from Merck Sharpe & Dohme the Volunteer Stroke Scheme set about updating its information on stroke with particular attention to stroke prevention. The literature when published provided a fantastic response from all sectors of the media country-wide. Stroke sufferers featured in many of the National & Local Newspapers and Magazines and in the Radio and T.V. interviews giving account of their strokes. This has a wonderful beneficial effect in terms of education. The general public can identify with real life situations and can learn from them.

The whole purpose of education is to empower people to take responsibility for their own health. Through this literature people can learn how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and also learn



the importance of managing blood pressure and diabetes. Most people rhyme off the usual mantra about taking regular exercise, reducing blood pressure and reducing cholesterol without understanding what it means. It is important that people know what the recommended levels for blood pressure and cholesterol are and keep a diary on their own levels when they visit their G.P.

All of the recommended levels are set out in our Stroke Prevention booklet.

The success of any stroke programme depends on a good relationship between the patient and their G.P. Initial efforts must be targeted towards identifying those individuals who have a high risk of stroke because of conditions such as high blood pressure and atrial fibrillation and intervening to reduce that risk.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Peter Kelly, Consultant Neurologist, Mater Hospital for his professional support over the past year.

It's a Date

A Short Story
Reproduced from
'THIS ABILITY'
By Jean Murphy

By Jean Murphy

As Susan drove along the winding road towards Garristown, her mind reflected back to the last time she met Seamus. She was a happily-married woman then, ten years back, and she was quite surprised to find that she still had feelings for him.

She wondered if he might be here this evening, or if she might, indeed ever meet Seamus again. She had her mind made up to stay widowed, and never to marry again. All of that pain and heartache after Jack's death, she never wanted to experience that again. When Nora phoned she was really surprised, but also pleased. 'I'm having a fund-raiser for a friend's baby towards a special piece of hospital equipment, would you like to come?' Kathleen Macken is coming, so is Margaret Rooney. My two sisters, and all their friends and neighbours. They'd love to meet you again. Several of my neighbours here and some more of the girls from school are coming. All told I'm expecting about fifty women. My friend Evelyn is making six exotic flower arrangements, and after a glass of wine and a cuppa tea we'll raffle the arrangements, and we'll have a good old chat and a giggle. I hope you can make it.' 'Oh. I'd love to meet the girls from school again, and see how everyone has been. I'll be there, ok.'

The evening was spectacular. Evelyn started the flower arranging. She explained where to source flowers, foliage and baskets, and how to select foliage to best suit particular flowers. Wine was served followed by tea and cakes, and by nine o'clock the place was buzzing with chatter and laughter. A man walked in. It was Seamus. 'Good night all,' he said, and passed through to

the kitchen. The door closed behind him and the chatter continued. Old school friends hugged, and reminisced about school, and who hadn't got a note in her head and was singing in the Church choir.

Susan was drawn between going shortly, and driving back to Marino without saying 'hello' to Seamus or to pursue a re-acquaintance with him and risk arousing buried feelings, which she knew were not far from the surface. She made her way towards Nora. There were women and flowers everywhere, and conversation was in full swing. A party atmosphere was everywhere and old school friends were huddled in conversation. 'Was that Seamus I saw passing Nora?,' Susan ventured. 'Yes it was, come on into the kitchen and say 'hello' before he heads off to bed.' They walked along the passageway to the kitchen. 'Oh hi, Seamus,' Susan called out as she entered the kitchen. For a moment Seamus was speechless. He was drinking tea at the old kitchen table which Susan fondly remembered when she was invited to Nora's house to play when they were children. Seamus was one of the younger children of a family of twelve. 'How are you?' he rose slowly from the table planting a kiss on Susan's cheek. 'Sure I'm grand, getting old,' laughed Susan. 'Aren't we all,' Seamus agreed. 'I better get back to the crowd and start the raffle for these flowers, or they'll be here for the night', laughed Nora, 'come on Susan.'

Have a chat

Susan followed Nora back to the great big old parlour, wishing that they could sit down, and have a chat about so many things. She wondered if Seamus had someone special in his life. He was fifty now, and still looked fresh-faced. He was reserved as he had been at school, and had changed very little. She wondered if he still ran the shop since his mother died, and what about the dairy and the dairy herd.

Nora picked the winning tickets, and presented the flower arrangements to the winners. When everyone had left Susan helped Nora count the cash. A total of twelve hundred Euros was raised, and Nora was delighted with the successful outcome. 'That's brilliant' Nora was pleased that the evening had been so enjoyable for everyone. Susan helped with clearing up the remaining cups and saucers and carried glasses back to the kitchen.

'I wish we could sit down for a chat and catch up on things,' Nora said taking a break. 'Will you come down for lunch on Sunday? just say you will Susan, and we'll catch up then.' 'I'd love to Nora, but what about Seamus, maybe he has plans.' 'Seamus never has plans, sure he'll cook the dinner for the three of us' laughed Nora. 'He could do with a bit of female company round here.' Susan drove home happy in the knowledge that she had made the effort to go to the fund-raiser. It would have been easy to say that she couldn't make it, it had been lovely meeting Seamus again. Sunday was sunny and pleasant, and a good day for a trip down the country. Susan picked up a bottle of red wine to take along. Seamus opened the door, and gently kissed her on the cheek. 'Nora hasn't arrived yet, so you're stuck with me for company till she comes' he smiled 'That's fine, sure we'll find something to talk about' Susan said casually. Seamus had the table set for three, and the kitchen was cosy with the cooker giving out clues of lamb in the oven for lunch. Mint jelly on the old kitchen table confirmed Susan's suspicions. 'Can I do anything to help?' Susan enquired. 'You just sit down there and relax Madam, and I'll take your coat.' Seamus took Susan's coat, and was ever so pleased to have this chance to chat with her alone.

He could chat peacefully without Nora butting in. Seamus had always been the quiet one at home. 'The house is still as I remember it, when I used come to play with Nora on Sundays, and what about

the shop?" 'Oh. I still run the shop, it's a pain sometimes. Come on out till I show you how it looks now.' Seamus led the way along the passage. Nothing much had changed in thirty years. 'When my parents were gone I continued to run the shop' he said thoughtfully. 'And you never married?' 'Well between the shop and the dairy I had to keep things going, and you know how time flies' laughed Seamus. 'And what about yourself, what have you been up to all these years?' 'Well my children are reared, the youngest is travelling at the moment, and as you know I've been widowed now for ten years. I work a couple of days, and try to stay out of trouble after that.' Seamus took the joint out of the oven, and continued to mix the gravy. 'Would you like a glass of wine while I'm carving up?' He poured two glasses as he spoke. 'Thank you, I'm not used to being spoiled like this.' Susan said, taking the glass and sitting back in the comfortable old armchair.

They were Teenagers

Conversation came easy as if time had stood still since they were teenagers dancing at the carnival in the town. 'Now madam, be seated.' Seamus held out the kitchen chair for her. 'There's no sign of Nora, so we might as well eat' 'Do they still run the carnival dances in the village every Summer?' 'They do, but sure they're full of twelve year olds doing war dances.' 'That's a real sign of getting old, you know,' Susan laughed making fun of him. 'You mean they don't have old-time waltzes any more?' 'Oh God forbid, you never knew who you were going to get stuck with.' Nora rushed through the door. 'Sorry I'm late, the lads never arrived home, and I had to round them up.' 'Help yourself,' Seamus pointed towards the oven. 'I was asking Seamus if they still run the carnival in the village, Nora.' 'Oh yeah, it'll be on soon, sure maybe you'll come, and we'll get

Seamus dancing again.' 'Go on, eat your dinner, and don't get cheeky,' Seamus rose to get dessert. 'What do you do at weekends, Susan, anything in particular?' Nora enquired. 'Well, I'm going down to open up my little cottage in Bettystown next weekend, and I go down there most weekends in the Summer. I bring my dog Holly with me, and we take long walks on the beach, and I play a bit of golf, actually maybe you guys might like to join me next Sunday, and I'll cook you Sunday dinner.' 'It's a date,' Seamus said without any hesitation. Susan reflected on the lovely time she had had on her way back to Dublin.

'It's a date kept' springing to mind, and she found herself smiling as she drove through the busy traffic home. Holly greeted her barking and wagging all over when she got back. 'We have a date next Sunday Holly, and if you are a good dog then you can come along too' Susan told her lovely collie.

Current Physician and Patient Knowledge, Perception and Behaviour With Regard to Stroke Risk Reduction in Hypertension

Professor of Internal Medicine and Cardiology, Chairman of Cardiology and Specialty School of Cardiology, University of Rome, Italy.

On April 11th 2005 a metaforum on Stroke Prevention in Hypertensive Patients was held in London, the VSS was represented by Anne Copeland.

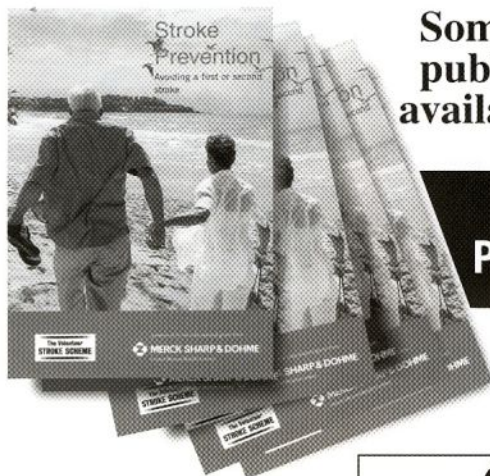
This article reflects the concerns of one of the many excellent contributors to the Forum.

Hypertension is the most common treatable risk factor of stroke. Efforts have been made to raise awareness about hypertension and its link to stroke. There is, however, a lack of clear understanding of the current state of knowledge, attitude, and perception of patients, the general population and physicians about hypertension and the risk for stroke.

Based on the results of a study a total of 85 manuscripts were identified and summarised. Of these only, 45 articles had information meeting the study objectives. Based on the results reported in these articles, it is observed people and public alike have adequate general knowledge about hypertension and stroke. A study in Italy which was conducted found that are generally aware that hypertension is one of the risk factors for stroke and that stroke could be a consequence

of hypertension. Patients do not consider hypertension to be a serious health concern. Physicians, on the other hand, appreciate the importance of managing hypertension to avoid future complications such as stroke. However, they do not conform to the recommendations made in various hypertension guidelines. They have higher thresholds than guideline recommendations for defining and categorising hypertension, for starting pharmacological therapy, and for target blood pressure goals. They also do not aggressively manage hypertension in older people considering that these patients are at a greater risk for developing a stroke.

Conclusion they reached is that there is a need for physicians to engage in patient communication regarding hypertension, its treatment and the dangers of uncontrolled blood pressure. There is also a need for aggressive action on the part of the physicians worldwide to implement recommended guidelines for hypertension diagnosis, treatment, and management.



Some of our
publications
available now!

Stroke Prevention

Avoiding
a first or
second
stroke

Fridge Magnet



How to avoid stroke

- Have regular blood pressure checks
- Get your cholesterol and blood sugar levels checked
- Follow your doctor's advice if your blood pressure, cholesterol level or blood sugar level is high
- Quit smoking
- Lose weight by cutting down on fat and calories
- Exercise regularly

The Volunteer
STROKE SCHEME



Sponsored by an educational grant from Merck Sharp & Dohme Ireland (Glaxo Health) Ltd

**Stroke
Prevention
Video
Out Soon**

20 Questions & Answers

Out
Soon!

To
receive a
copy of these
publications
Send 60c with
either an A5 or an A4 Envelope to:

Volunteer Stroke Scheme

249 Crumlin Road,
Dublin 12.
Phone: 01 - 4559036
Fax : 01 - 4557013

Website:
www.strokescheme.ie

Email:
vss@iolfree.ie

Volunteer Stroke Scheme Calendar 2005/2006

July 2005						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Volunteer Stroke Scheme What is a STROKE?

Stroke is a result of damage to the brain by interruption of blood supply or haemorrhage.

Risk Factors

- (1) Family history of stroke,
- (2) High blood pressure,
- (3) Smoking,
- (4) Diabetes,
- (5) History of heart disease.

Recognising mini strokes or T.I.A.'s (transient ischaemic attacks) is extremely important.

The most common symptoms of T.I.A.'s are:

- (1) Temporary loss of power in either the arm or leg,
- (2) Sensation of pins & needles in the limb or on one side,
- (3) Partial loss of vision in one eye,
- (4) Temporary loss of speech,
- (5) Short blackout attacks.

If you have concerns regarding the above see your G.P. immediately.

Stroke Care.

The Volunteer Stroke Scheme provides support through their stroke clubs, information services, respite holidays and their loan scheme of technical aids.

V.S.S. members themselves support one another and show that a disability does not stop one having a fulfilled and happy life.

Each person should have their physical, psychological and social needs met, thereby improving their quality of life.

If you want more information about Stroke contact:
Volunteer Stroke Scheme

249, Crumlin Road, Dublin 12.
Tel: 01-4559036
Fax: 01-4557013
www.strokescheme.ie
Email: vss@iolfree.ie

North West Stroke Club

The Great Outdoors

**Belalp Carraroe Michael Mulvaney -Sec.
071 9165526
Co. Sligo Ed Blake -Chairperson
071 9160368**

The North West Stroke Group has just completed its first full year of operation with a successful AGM held recently in Sligo.

As in our last report in the 2004 issue of VSS, we looked on the year as a learning one but hoped to be a very fruitful one to our members. Monthly meetings were held in the Carrowroe Social Center on the outskirts of Sligo. These were well attended by stroke patients and carers. We varied the content between suitable activities, and talks/demonstrations of useful services. A feature of every meeting was the social side, with a welcome tea, coffee and bun break.

June and July saw excursions to the outdoors. In June, we had a very enjoyable evening cruise on the nearby Lough Gill in the new state of the art passenger cruiser "Isle of Inisfree" operated by a local businessman. We got a lovely calm evening on the lake, and a gorgeous sunset. Music on board was pro-

vided by musicians from a local Comhaltas group. In July, we went back in time with a visit to the local Folk Park in nearby Riverstown. This was well received, as many members could recall using some of the items on display, and knew some of the history associated with the area in question.

Although there were no group activities during August, the Committee held a one-day session to look back on how the previous 6 months had gone in respect of fulfilling members need and consider any changes. This was a very useful exercise and set our targets and program for the remainder of the year as well as looking to 2005.

September saw the start of our Winter program. As well as the monthly activity meetings, we had a very successful basket-making course. It was very well attended and all participants learned a new skill and added to the home decorations. Very good too for improving the hand dexterity.

Halloween was of course a special event, with games, crafts and of course a special cake and pie to mark the occasion. It was not long after until the Christmas Party was upon us. The local Community hall was suitably decorated and we had a great afternoon partaking of the customary fare. Santa was there as well with a gift for all.

And so ended our first year of operation. Member's feedback indicated it was a successful one, and for us on the Committee it was gratifying to know we provided a service.

We are now well into year two and so far so good. Meetings are continuing and a Summer programme is in hand.

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 evenings.)
or our Website www.vssstrokescheme.ie
Email: vss@iolfree.ie

On Sale Now!



Southside News and Views

**Bridie Lyons,
South Dublin Supervisor**

Although the VSS clubs in their current format are providing vital services for stroke patients and carers, the organisation is planning to expand by providing outreach services in areas of the city not yet served by the VSS.

In these ever changing times we live in, information and education form a major part in everyday life. It is hoped that the expansion of this organisation will meet the future needs of patients and carers, while still continuing on the work in the clubs. We look forward to challenging times ahead. The first of these meetings will be held in St Mary's Parish Centre Lucan on 27th June 2005.

2004 to 2005 was no exception to previous years in Taney and Mt Argus clubs.

The clubs served the members well by providing services such as information on security and safety in the home by the Garda Crime Prevention Office, healing by visualization by healing therapist Yvonne Timmins, information on services and rights by Citizen Information, as well as carrying on the day to day



activities of the clubs. Presentations by Sr Peter of the Carmelite Sisters Harolds Cross on their missionary work in El Salvador were very interesting.

Poulaphuca House

On May 3rd the two clubs went for lunch to Poulaphuca House Brittas. This was a very popular venue – not too long a coach journey followed by a delicious lunch, favourable weather meant we could sit outside while the more active members went for walks in the garden.

On July 7th a trip to the Botanical Gardens Glasnevin by Taney Club was most enjoyable, in spite of heavy showers which sent us scurrying from one greenhouse to another. The year was rounded off before the break-up for Summer by a garden party in my house on 29th July. Again this was a very enjoyable occasion enhanced by lovely sunshine.

The respite holiday was to the

Auburn Lodge Ennis with trips to Bunratty Castle, Lahinch and the Burren thrown in.

Both clubs visited the Guinness Storehouse James St. on two different occasions. After informative and interesting tours of the museum, lunch was served in the Brewery Bar. Afterwards we adjourned to the Gravity Bar on the tenth floor, where pints of Guinness were served. It was great fun picking out the various famous Dublin buildings and landmarks.

The Christmas party

The Christmas party was held in the Mount Argus Community Centre. This was a very lively affair; the dinner was delicious, followed by an evening of music, song and dance. As usual Diago were very generous in supplying plenty of red and white wine and soft drinks being supplied by Coca Cola.

On April 20th both clubs went on outing to the Ardenode Hotel Ballymore Eustace. The only complaint about this occasion was that the day went by too quickly. Rita and the staff served a delicious lunch and were very helpful and kind to all.

I wish to thank the volunteers who give their time so willingly and without whom the clubs would not function. I am very grateful to all the members who provide emotional to each other and who make new members so welcome.

Around t



Shay in a reflective mood.



Trip to Auburn Lodge, Ennis.



Vera, Phyllis, Anne and Paddy.



Arthur and Siobhan Lyons.



Mary and Angela, Poulaphuca House.



Theresa and George.



Colm and Barbara.



Brigid and Irene.



Brian, Kay, Rose and Brigid.



Anne, Pat, Erica and Vera.



Teresa, Noelle and Dolores at the Christmas Party.



Brendan and Denis at Auburn Lodge, Ennis.



Rose and Hugh at Poulaphuca House.



Irene, Sioban and Aine at Poulaphuca House.



Connie, Phyllis and Patricia at Poulaphuca House.



Brendan and Iise at the Garden Party.



Arthur and Teresa at Poulaphuca House.



Barbara, George and Eileen at the Garden Party.

Dan, Alex and Carmel at Poulaphuca House.



he Clubs



Trip to Ennis: Albert, Tom, Kitty and Steve, 2004.



*Club Birthday Volunteers.
L-R: Kitty, Anne, Nancy, Bernie, Deirdre and Tess.*



Monday Club, Halloween 2004.



*Wednesday Club:
Phillip O'Reilly,
Club Person of the Year 2004.*



*Birthday Party Monday Club
Tom, Joe and Noel.*



*Wednesday Club:
June Comyn, Club Person of the Year
2004.*



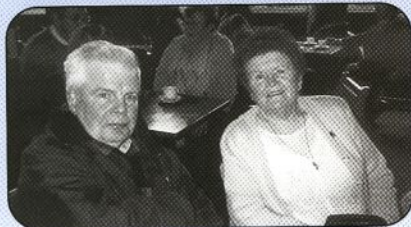
*Sr. Marie and Sr. Margaret who is
now retired.*



*Christmas Party 2004:
Christy Coleman, Mary Byrne and Erica.*



*Christmas Party 2004:
Steve, Deirdre, Nancy, Kitty and Anne
Copeland.*



*St Valentine's Day Poetry Competition:
John Walsh and Nancy Carroll.*



*St Valentine's Day Poetry Competition:
L to R: Joan, Betty and Joan.*

The Midlands News

Mary Mahon

The year 2004 has been a very busy and rewarding for our organisation, with Parties, Outings, etc. It commenced with our annual Churchgate Collection in January, this being our main source of income for the year, it was very successful, thanks to our loyal collectors who do the good deed each year in all weathers.

Our two Clubs are doing fine, Drumrany and Mullingar, meeting each Month their Social Afternoon, to have their own Agenda, Organising Parties and Outings for their Members during the year.

Our two Parties took place again this year Easter and Christmas and were enjoyed by all, good attendance, of patients and their carers. The Christmas Party is the one with a great attendance, it was held in the Bloomfield House Hotel, there was a lovely meal and the Ballroom was beautifully decorated with Christmas Tree etc, good music and Santa paid his customary visit.

Our trip to Knock in July proved very enjoyable, the weather was very pleasant, and accommodation so comfortable and homely, thanks to the Flatley family. We stayed five days, thanks also to the helpers who gave of their time to travel with us at their own expense.

We had our 6Km Sponsored Walk in May it too was quite successful, quite a good number of Walkers and a good financial return.

The Rehab Unit in St. Marys' Hospital, Mullingar is visited once each month where new referrals are contacted and followed up on their return Home.

We tender our sympathy to the families who have lost loved ones during the year.

A busy year in 2004, we look forward to 2005, for bigger and better things, and hope our efforts have given some comfort and consolation to those patients and carers alike.

Visitation to the homes is something we feel is very important, the patients looks forward to the chat and we are made feel very welcome.

This is the year of Activities we hope to do better next year.



L-R. Laura and Nora Whaley, Mary Bennett and Son Tony at the Christmas Party.



Betty Lee and Niece Marian at the Christmas Party.



John and Mai Daly with Santa at the Christmas Party.

Around the Clubs



Claire, Josie, Bridie, Helen and Carmel at the Garden Party.



Gerry, Sioban, and Kay at the Christmas Party.



Phyllis, Patricia and Jean.



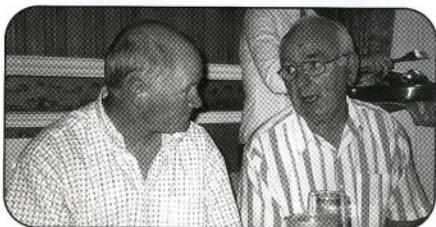
John, Brendan and Angela at Poulaphuca House.



Betty and Maura at Poulaphuca House.



Doris, Eileen, Sioban, Pat and Gretta at the Christmas Party.



Arthur and Phil at the Garden Party in Ballinteer.



Christmas Party in Mount Argus with husband and wife Nora and Dan.



Paddy Salmon, Paddy Kelly, Angela and Theresa at the Christmas Party.

All Kinds of Everything



Erica O'Mara,
North Dublin
Supervisor

That is what we aim for in our Northside Clubs with both Monday and Wednesday Clubs hives of activities designed to be fun as well as encouraging speech and concentration. As always Club mornings start with tea, coffee and chat. If anyone has been away for a week or more for any reason a welcome awaits them as also for newcomers. Physiotherapy is still a regular with most people participating at whatever level they can manage.

Social occasions are as always very important to both Clubs and this year the Monday Club celebrated 18 years of memorable activities. A tradition has also been that of Superquinn of Northside providing a birthday cake. Every year two Club members are awarded a trophy for Club Person of the Year, very much appreciated by this year's recipients - Betty O'Brien and Christy Coleman.

The 5th of July saw the break-up for the Summer Holidays and of course marked with an outing for both Clubs to the Waterfront Hotel in Donabate, where we received a very warm welcome as well as a beautiful meal.

A Carers' Group was held on the 1st of September for Carers to share their ups and downs of looking after a loved one. There was a great sharing and discussion with the showing of our video on Stroke.

On Monday the 4th of October we set off on our annual trip, this time to Ennis with a group of 40, both Club members and volunteers from all four clubs, North and South Dublin. A great time was had by all with friendships made and others renewed. One of the highlights was our trip to Bunratty Castle and the old style cottages. The four days flew by and soon we were heading for home again.

November saw another Club birthday this time for the Wednesday Club, again with a Superquinn cake and candles for our 13th Birthday. Club members of the year who qualified for trophies were June Comyn and Phillip O'Reilly.

Our Christmas Party came around very quickly and we headed back to the Waterfront Hotel again where we had a most enjoyable evening. This hotel is very accessible and the staff are most helpful.

Every year we give thanks to our volunteers and drivers who give of their time and friendship. Without them we would have no Clubs. We wish Sr Margaret well in her retirement. She will be very much missed by us all from our very first Club Meeting, giving us every help and encouragement and proving a friend to all.

The members and volunteers of the Monday Club send their sympathy to the families of Kay Byrne and John Rooney recently deceased and sadly missed by all.

You can visit The Stroke Association's website at www.stroke.org.uk

TalkStroke is a discussion forum on the website which allows you to share your experiences with other people affected by stroke.

Humorous

CHURCH NOTICES

Thank God for church secretaries with typewriters. These sentences actually appeared in church bulletins or were announced in church services:

Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa, will be speaking tonight At Calvary Methodist. Come hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.

Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.

Low Self-Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7pm. Please use the back door.

Weight Watchers will meet at 7pm at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance.

The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks on the Water. The sermon tonight: "Searching for Jesus."

Miss Charlene Mason sang "will not pass this way again," giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

The Rector will preach his farewell message after which the choir will sing: "Break Forth Into Joy".

DRIVER'S LICENSE

A young boy had just gotten his driving permit. He asked his father, who was a minister, if they could discuss his use of the family car. His father took him into his study and said, "I'll make a deal with you. You bring your grades up, study your Bible a little, and get your hair cut. Then we'll talk about it."

After about a month, the boy came back and again asked his father if they could discuss his use of the car. They again went into the father's study where the father said "Son, I've been very proud of you. You have brought your grades up and you've studied the Bible diligently, but you didn't get your hair cut." The young man waited a moment and then replied, "You know, Dad, I've been thinking about that. Samson had long hair, Moses had long hair, Noah had long hair, and even Jesus had long hair." The minister said, "Yes and everywhere they went, they walked."

Balance problems Explained

Falls and fall-related injuries are among the most common complications after a stroke but the majority of falls, although distressing, are not very serious.

This article provides information about the systems in the body which control balance and how these systems can go wrong after a stroke. It also explains how balance problems can be improved and treated.

What is balance?

Balance means the ability to hold your body up and change its position whilst doing other activities. Balance is important because it is involved in day-to-day activities such as getting up from a chair, walking and bending over to pick something up.

How is balance controlled?

Balance is very complex and it is controlled by a number of different systems in the body.

- Eyes. In order to have a good sense of balance we need to be able to see where we are in relation to the world around us.
- Sensors in joints, tendons and muscles. The brain needs to know how the feet and legs are positioned in relation to the ground, and how the head is positioned in relation to the chest and shoulders. This information is detected by sensors located in our muscles, tendons and joints.
- Cognition. The ability of the brain to understand where the body is and to provide a mental 'map' of surroundings and plan movements.
- Muscle strength and joint flexibility. The muscles and joints must be able to carry out the 'orders' from the brain.

- Ears. Balance organs within the ears inform the brain about the movements and position of your head. The balance organs are located in the inner ear, which is called the 'labyrinth'

Why can a stroke cause balance problems?

A stroke can cause problems with balance due to

- Injury to one of the systems that control balance and movement.
- Injury to the nerves that send messages to the brain.
- Injury to the balance centres of the brain itself.
- Paralysis and weakness on one side of the body, which can make stroke sufferers unsteady on their feet.

Can balance problems after a stroke be improved?

Balance problems often improve naturally as the brain slowly repairs itself in the weeks after a stroke. Recovery is helped by trying as far as possible to keep moving. Many people who have had a stroke regain their balance within three months. However, everyone is different and there is no fixed time that it will take to get better. The problems caused by stroke may mean that you are not able to move around a lot and this can affect how long it takes for balance problems to improve. For some people balance problems will never completely go away.

Balance retraining exercises

Balance retraining exercises may help people who have had a stroke to improve their balance. Because there

are several possible causes of balance problems after stroke, different types of exercises will be appropriate for different people.

A physiotherapist can help you to work out which movements you need to practice and therefore which exercises are most suitable for you. The most common exercises will be simple tasks practising everyday movements in an environment in which you feel safe. At first these will be practiced with the therapists and then either on your own or with a nurse or relative.

- If your balance has been badly affected it may be that the first thing to tackle is sitting balance - practising reaching and dressing without toppling over
- Next would be 'transfers' - moving from bed to chair, or chair to toilet. The therapist may provide grab rails to help you
- For most people the majority of work will be practising sitting to standing and walking around the room/ ward. A walking aid may help you.

The exercises (called the Cawthorne Cooksey programme) are designed to make you feel dizzy in order to help your brain adapt. You may feel uncomfortable or scared about some of the exercises that you need to carry out. It is often the fear of falling which stops people practising their exercises. However, challenging your balance is an important part of stroke rehabilitation and you will need to do the exercises for several weeks before you see real progress. Don't be disheartened if you fall a few times - if you practice when somebody else is around, they can help you.

(Reproduced courtesy of The Stroke Associations 'Stroke News')

**Tips to avoid a fall
See the next page**

Tips to avoid a fall

The following tips may help to prevent you from suffering a fall

- Be careful of rugs, carpets, uneven floors and loose steps which could make a person trip.
- Be aware of cupboards or shelves that are too high or too low to reach easily, which could cause you to overbalance.
- Footwear - don't wear baggy slippers!
- Dim lighting in rooms and hallways increases the risk of falling - leave a light on at night if you need to use the toilet.
- Check that any walking aid (especially the rubber tip at the bottom) is safe and use it.
- Wear your hearing aid.
- Ask an Occupational Therapist to check if you need any aids or adaptations (such as grab rails or raised toilet seats).

Theo's Office News

**Theo Davis,
Honorary Secretary**



Since the last VSS Newsletter the office has been extremely busy. In October 2004, through the kind auspices of a grant from Dublin Bus and Alex Tuohys' graphic design expertise, we produced a 2005 bookmark calendar which also contains educational information on Stroke Care and Risk Factors of Stroke, 5000 or these bookmarks were distributed through chemist shops and public libraries and have proved to be a very successful venture.

Early in 2005, Messrs. Merck Sharpe & Dohme kindly sponsored our booklet "Stroke Prevention - Avoiding a first or second Stroke." Our Chairperson, Anne Copeland and the Neurovascular Clinical Science Unit, Stroke Service, Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, worked extremely hard along with Merck Sharpe & Dohme to produce this very, well written and informative booklet. The promotion of the booklet through advertising on the radio nationwide, in newspapers around the country and in magazines resulted in a huge request to the office for the booklet. At times

I was not visible behind the mound of envelopes requesting the booklet on my desk. It became known as "Theo's organized chaos". I must say it was a very satisfying venture.

The old dilapidated plastic VSS nameplate on the front door of the office was replaced with a brass plaque which stands out proudly and once again thanks to Alex's expertise has our logo engraved on it.

Our new video on Stroke is well on its way and should be available for distribution within a very short time.

Through the publicity of the Bookmark and Stroke Prevention booklet, we received lots of queries and referrals. Even the numbers visiting our website (www.strokescheme.ie) have increased over the year.

It is nice to be able to write positively about the work of the VSS. All our achievements are only made possible by the dedication and hard work of everyone involved. The atmosphere at both clubs and any organized VSS events always appear to be happy, relaxed and enjoyable occasions.

I will conclude by wishing you all a great Summer.

Theo Davis, Hon. Secretary.

FAMOUS QUOTES & SAYINGS

You've got to break a few eggs to make an omelette

"Before seeking revenge, first dig two graves."

- Chinese proverb

"If you give a man a fish, he will have a single meal.

If you teach him how to fish, he will eat all his life."

- Kwan-Tzu

"Talking and eloquence are not the same: to speak and to speak well are two things. A fool may talk, but a wise man speaks."

- Ben Jonson

"When you are arguing with a fool make sure he isn't doing the same thing."

- Anonymous

"Eternity is not something that begins after you're, are, dead. It is going on all the time. We are in it now."

- Charlotte P. Gilman

Money Matters



John L'Estrange Reports

Once again we had a good year on the financial front in 2004.

The Eastern Regional Health Authority gave us €25,000 for 2004. 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 €1400.

Tess Harrington's Quiz Night raised €500.

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

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 are grateful to them for their generosity.

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

My Year Off

By Robert McCrum.

Stroke

at your fingertips.

By Anthony Rodd, Penny Irwin

& Bried Penhale

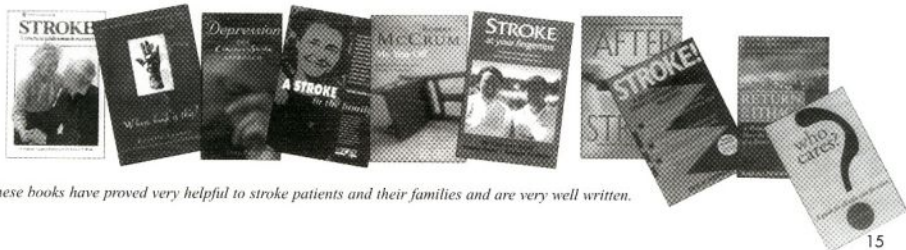
Published by Class Publishing.

Whose hand is this?

By Rosalie Leaney.

Anyone having difficulty tracing these books should contact the VSS Office.

Telephone:
01 - 455 9036
(Monday, Wednesday, Thursday mornings.)
or our Website
www.strokescheme.ie
Email: vss@iolfree.ie



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

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,
Dublin 12.
Phone: 01 - 4559036
Fax : 01 - 4557013

Patrons:

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

Registered Charity
CHY 6989

Committee

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Secretary : Theo Davis
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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 2005.

Name

Address

.....

.....

Phone.....

Cheques should be made payable to the
Volunteer Stroke Scheme.

Signed.....

Date