

Life and death matters

- your chance to make a difference



Professor Sir Mike Richards, Chief Inspector of Hospitals, Care Quality Commission, presenting staff from Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, with the Gold Standards Framework Quality Hallmark Award earlier this year.

"Nothing in this world is certain except death and taxes," (Benjamin Franklin). Parliament has much to say about taxes, but is there more that Parliament could do to help the other certainty of life for every single one of us - to help us live well and die well? We believe that there is much more that can be done and that this imperative should be raised much higher on the political agenda - it really is a 'matter of life and death'.

We know this is important, we know there are some areas of progress in this country, yet we also know we are not doing well enough. Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health, described end of life care as "a litmus test for the whole of the NHS". Is care consistently reliable for everyone, or is there an unwitting 'diagnostic apartheid' ensuring people receive better care if they have cancer or live in a leafy suburb?

MPs, who receive heart-felt letters from bereaved constituents, or receive fall-out from the latest media horror story, including the recent Ombudsman's report, 'Dying without Dignity', all know things are just not good enough. But how is Parliament responding to these wake-up calls, and how can Government support more of us to live and die well? As the population ages, how can we better care for even more people in the last stage of life, enable more to live and die well and prevent expensive over-medicalisation of dying?

One thing we do know is that doing nothing is not an option!

At The National GSF Centre in End of Life Care, the leading provider of training for generalist frontline staff, we believe we offer at least part of the solution - but we also need your support. Over the last 15 years, we have trained thousands of frontline staff in hospitals, GP practices, care homes and domiciliary care to ensure better lives for people and recognised standards of care as part of a population-based end of life care approach. The aim is that anyone, whether being cared for at home, in a care home or in hospital, receives the quality care they need and deserve. GSF is recognised as best practice by the Care Quality Commission, NICE, Royal Colleges of Nursing and General Practice and many leading policy makers.

We work at scale through our 12 regional centres and six integrated GSF cross-boundary care sites, with multiple measures of effectiveness that lead to independently regarded accreditation. We focus on enabling earlier recognition, better listening to patients and better coordinated proactive care, enabling people to live well and die well where they choose. We have trained almost 3000 care homes, thousands of GP practices and hundreds of hospital teams, and have affected the care of many millions of people.

But there is much more to do - and soon this could be you or your family. So we ask, will you help us do more to try to meet the challenge of the ageing population nearing the end of life? If so, we would love to hear from you.

www.goldstandardsframework.org.uk
info@gsfcentre.co.uk 01743 291 891

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