

## *'Textbook' Care*

There has been a lot of comment lately about end of life care, much of it critical and so I'm writing this article at the suggestion of a friend. She said I must start by explaining that I'm a pro-active person—did she mean bossy? I need to add that Brian was a very calm and patient man, who had a very strong faith.

My husband, Brian, died on 8th April. He was diagnosed with colon cancer in December 2012 and although he had two operations and a course of chemotherapy, we had continued to live life to the full. In January this year, after we had had a lovely holiday in Tenerife, our colorectal surgeon at St Richard's said that although he would consult his oncologist colleague, he thought that there was no further treatment available and also thought, correctly, that Brian would not want any aggressive treatment.

The textbook care then started. The NHS colorectal surgeon phoned in the evening to say that he would contact the surgery at Southbourne the next day to arrange palliative care. The following morning, the Duty GP phoned to ask if she could come and see us that day and said that she would contact St Wilfrid's Hospice. The clinical nurse specialist (CNS) from St Wilfrid's came a few days later. Shortly after that, a pattern emerged. The GP phoned on Monday mornings to check in with us and to ask if we wanted a visit later in the week. The CNS came each week and the two liaised amazingly efficiently. As an example, on one visit the CNS had notes of the phone discussion which had taken place about an hour before. The aim of the care plan which was set up was to avoid pain by anticipating any need, so medication was provided in advance and to keep Brian comfortable, equipment was ordered and delivered well in advance. Some of the equipment, a recliner chair, was loaned from St Wilfrid's and some was loaned through the NHS. This service was extremely efficient. In fact, a hospital bed was ordered on the Thursday before Easter, and I assumed that it would be delivered after Easter. No. It arrived that very day at 5:30pm, and I had to ask for it to be taken away, as I hadn't had time to make the necessary furniture removal arrangements. It was a brand new bed, and it was then delivered on Easter Saturday.

These are the practical arrangements. What was even more impressive was the remarkable care and support from the GP and all the staff at St Wilfrid's. The fact that there was always someone available to answer questions and suggest answers was invaluable. Each week the situation was reviewed and any necessary adjustments to medication made. All this meant that Brian was able to continue as the quiet, kind man he was, and to die in peace and dignity at home.

Finally, it was the love and care of the family, our friends and neighbours which enabled us to remain positive. It felt that we were held in a net which supported us and continues to support me now.

Thank goodness we came to Bosham.

*Janet Howe*