

Charity steps in to provide a new service for dementia carers to address risk of burnout and breakdown - numbers affected continue to rise

“I look after my Mum and everything is so hard – I can’t cope any more. I feel like I am falling apart and nothing is left. I am stuck in this hell and I feel guilty for not wanting to be here. She’s my Mum but she has turned my life into this. I just don’t know what to do – I want it all to end.”

David, Caring for his Mum, call to Admiral Nursing DIRECT

- Family carers experience a high level of psychological and financial strain due to caring for a family member with dementia ¹
- Many family carers report that they suffer ‘burnout’ ²
- Family carers report that they have suffered a breakdown of some kind and have felt unable to cope ³
- Restricted social life, poor health and a negative outlook on caring are significant factors associated with burnout and breakdown⁴

The Charity **for dementia** today (Tuesday 27 February 2007) announces the launch of their new service Admiral Nursing DIRECT, a helpline manned by experienced Admiral Nurses, to help address the shortfall in support experienced by family and professional carers.

“A diagnosis of dementia has a traumatising impact on the patient and their family,” states Barbara Stephens, Chief Executive of **for dementia**. “Many find they cannot cope and experience burnout and even mental breakdown. Depression is very common among family carers. Yet it is a fact that many receive inadequate information and little or no support.

People with dementia and their carers deserve a properly resourced service, just as much

¹ Carers’ experience of the Admiral Nurse Service, DSTC, for dementia, May 2005

² Almberg Grasstrom Winblad, Sweden, Journal of Advanced Nursing, 1997

³ Review of calls to Admiral Nursing DIRECT, for dementia, December 2006

⁴ Almberg Grasstrom Winblad, Sweden, Journal of Advanced Nursing, 1997

as those diagnosed with other conditions, such as cancer. Sadly very few can access the support they need.

Without that support, carers lose their own futures – their jobs, freedom, identity - as well as those they love. This is the real cost of dementia – the physical, psychological and financial toll it takes on carers and those with dementia – and that personal cost will continue to rise as the percentage of the UK population affected by dementia increases.⁵

Admiral Nurses have been taking increasing numbers of calls from families, carers and people with dementia, many on the edge of breakdown and even suicide, desperate for help.

Supportive information and practical advice, given in the early stages, may avert a crisis.”

Diana Melly is wife and carer of 80 year old jazz legend George. George is in the early stages of dementia. Diana says: “You have to make a lot of changes in your life when caring for someone with dementia, even in the early stages. Practically I don’t leave him on his own for long. Talking to Admiral Nurses is seeing me through this difficult phase and helping me face the future.”

Currently, **for dementia** has 48 Admiral Nurses established in 16 locations around the UK, providing support to other health and care professionals, as well as directly to families in their own homes.

“Admiral Nurses are growing in numbers but slowly,” adds Barbara Stephens. “Many PCTs and Health Trusts, struggling with the implementation of the NICE Dementia Care Guidance, recognise the value of Admiral Nurses, but currently cannot find the money to work in partnership with us to implement a service.”

Admiral Nursing DIRECT is manned by experienced professionals, Admiral Nurses. From today, family carers, healthcare professionals and people with dementia can access the innovative helpline and information support service. The development of the service has been supported by a restricted grant from Shire Pharmaceuticals.

Admiral Nurse Jules Jones, Project Lead for Admiral Nursing DIRECT, says: “People with dementia and their carers need support and advice at all points along their journey with this life-changing disease – but often what they need most of all is someone to listen to their worries and

⁵ ‘The rise in dementia: new evidence on prevalence and demography’ Professor Sube Banerjee, Institute of Psychiatry (Alzheimer’s Society Conference 27 Feb 07)

concerns. Our new helpline telephone service can give them time and that can make all the difference.”

Professional and family carers can call the dedicated Admiral Nursing DIRECT phone line 0845 257 9406 on Tuesday daytime 10 am- 4 pm, and Tuesday and Thursday evenings between 6pm and 9pm. Callers may leave a message at any time and request a call-back, or email their questions to direct@fordementia.org.uk.

“**for dementia** is ambitious to build the capacity of Admiral Nursing DIRECT as quickly as possible, funds permitting,” adds Barbara Stephens. “But most importantly our vision is to establish Admiral Nurses in the community across the whole of the UK.

New services begin in North Wales and the North-East next year to join our existing teams in London, Kent, West Midlands and the North-west.”

ENDS/

Further media information: please call 01264-710428 / 07887 -714957 / 07766 – 467535

or email info@minervaprc.com

Available for interview: Diana Melly, carer and wife of George Melly; Barbara Stephens, CE, for dementia; Jules Jones Admiral Nursing DIRECT Project Lead and Admiral Nurse; other Admiral Nurses, carers and medical practitioners will be attending the launch on Tuesday 27th February in central London (8.30 -11am). Media welcome.

Photos available: Diana and George Melly, Admiral Nurses, carers.

Quotes from carers, scenarios & voice recording of David’s call presented at the launch available on request.

Notes for Editors:

1. The mission of **for dementia** is to improve the quality of life of people with dementia by promoting and developing Admiral Nursing, providing high quality training and promoting best practice for professionals working with older people, carers and people with dementia. For more information on **for dementia**, log on to www.fordementia.org.uk. Admiral Nursing DIRECT (AND) is a telephone, email and web-based information line developed to support professionals, family carers and people with dementia. Carers can access information by emailing direct@fordementia.org.uk or telephone 0845 257 9406.
2. To make a donation to **for dementia** and the Admiral Nursing DIRECT service please visit the website www.fordementia.org.uk