

When I began my nursing training in the early 1970s, end of life care accounted for perhaps two hours of our training syllabus (well, there was a lot to cram in). At that time, Elizabeth Kubler Ross was

Last November, *Caring Times* editor **GEOFF HODGSON** attended a training day for care home professionals working towards Gold Standards Framework accreditation for their care homes. Here, Geoff reports on what is now a widely

Gold Standards Framework: 'Helping people to live well until they die'

recognised professional approach to end of life care.

the death and dying guru and most of what she espoused is still taught today.

But I soon found that the theory was rarely implemented in practice, either in the acute hospital setting or, when I subsequently worked in them, in care homes. That, I am pleased to say, has demonstrably changed. Having been given the opportunity to join 15

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communication skills, reducing hospitalisation, anticipatory prescribing, multi-disciplinary working, out-of hours care.

Evidencing

As with any rigorous accreditation process, all these elements which make up good end of life care must be evidenced and documented. When added to the already onerous burden of paperwork which attaches to the day-to-day running of a care home, one can only admire the enthusiasm with which the participating homes have embraced their task.

Some co-ordinators said they had spent off-duty time to complete 'after death analyses', an audit tool which aims to identify areas of care which perhaps may have been better addressed, and there followed a discussion as to how the evidencing and documentation can be achieved within the hours of a working day. Care providers tell me that once staff had 'got into the swing' of delivering end of life care within the Gold Standard Framework, there was no appreciable increase in the time staff had to spend away from their core task of delivering care to residents.

Care homes are well placed to be leaders in end of life care. They are caring communities in which compassionate staff are increasingly being given the training and expertise to care for the 'whole person'. The Gold Standards Framework has now been established in primary healthcare and social care settings for well over a decade and is well on its way along the path to becoming one of the cornerstones of good practice. GSF expresses its main objective with the phrase 'helping people to live well until they die' and surely this is what we all wish for, for ourselves and our loved ones. **ct**



Delegates from seven care homes attended the one-day Gold Standards Framework accreditation module in Dorset, in November.

senior care home workers in a day-long training module as part of the Gold Standards Framework (GSF) accreditation process, the fourth in a series of five held over a nine month period, I was struck by the professionalism of those attending – they weren't managers but senior carers appointed by their homes to be co-ordinators, motivating and leading their colleagues towards accreditation.

These people do the care sector proud; they responded to the course facilitators and were clearly engaged with the accreditation process. I sensed their commitment to their work and the human compassion they brought to it. These people will become the care home managers of tomorrow and it bodes well.

GSF was originally developed in 2000 as a

grass roots initiative to improve primary palliative care from within primary care but has since then been extended to care homes and domiciliary care. To date, 404 care homes have attained the first level of GSF accreditation, of which 108 have been awarded 'Beacon' status, the highest level of accreditation. Another 88 care homes are presently enrolled in the training programme with 11 currently going through the accreditation process.

The one-day module I attended focused on spiritual care and the need to support family members and care staff but we were also given an overview of the entire course.

It is certainly comprehensive, covering as it does dignity and quality of life, control of symptoms, advance care planning,

■ For more information on the Gold Standards Framework, visit www.goldstandardsframework.org.uk/