

HOSPICE INFORMATION BULLETIN

- 3 Research: Carers
- 4 ICPCN: Sunrise over Bangladesh
- 5 UK hospices celebrate Carers Week
- 6 People with learning disabilities
- 7 Hospice Isle of Man - 25 years on
- 8/9 Isabel Hospice pilots patient discharge project
- 10/11 Worldwide: India and Ecuador
- 12 Civil funerals
- 13/14 People, places and resources
- 15 Reviews
- 16 Help the Hospices welcomes End of Life Care strategy

Lebed - thriving not just surviving

Why are patients at **Trinity Hospice** donning feather boas and glittery hats and most definitely thriving? **Julia Williams** says it's all down to the Lebed method of movement and dance

Developed in the USA in 1980 for breast cancer care and lymphoedema management, Lebed is therapeutic exercise and movement that encourages fun, laughter and dance. Movements come from jazz, ballet and physiotherapy exercises put into a new context using popular music from the 1930s to modern day, and props such as soap bubbles, hats, leis and boas. The programme was developed by Mark, Joel and Sherry Lebed, two surgeons and a dance movement specialist, to help their mother cope physically and emotionally with breast cancer. Sherry Lebed later developed breast cancer and lymphoedema and the programme was developed to benefit others.

In 2005, in response to a new-build project and fast-moving government initiatives for models of care, Trinity Hospice, London, developed a new outpatient programme. Having recently attended the first UK instructor training in The Lebed Method of Movement and Dance, I knew this would be the perfect addition to our new programme. It would encourage patients to take a more active part in their care; to do rather than be done to. Instead of attending the day centre on a specific day, patients would now have to make choices and decide which courses they would sign up for. Our new outpatient service would combine individualised

complementary therapies, yoga, physiotherapy, one-to-one sessions and classes in managing breathlessness, art, art therapy, hypnotherapy and counselling. Lebed provided the missing link in this programme – dance, movement and fun.

Getting into the music

In the USA The Lebed Method is considered a successful tool for managing and preventing lymphoedema. The opening movements focus on the lymphatic system and emulate manual lymphatic drainage through self-movement. Whilst initially this may not seem a priority in palliative care, the whole Lebed package contains a strong psychosocial element, together with excellent therapeutic movements. Participants always work with a chair; as exercises can be done seated or standing there is no need to 'sit out'.

Music that is fun, lively and varied is paramount. Our patients, many aged in their 60s and 70s, were pioneers of Rock and Roll, the Jive and in their prime during the Flower Power era of the 1960s. This,

rather than wartime and 'East End' songs, is more appropriate taking our clients back to the dancing and singing of their youth – and they do sing along! Classes are mixed age and ability: a younger woman with motor neurone disease in her wheel chair, a lady in her 70s in her best frock, a dapper man in summer shorts and loafers. It is a call to everyone to have fun, feel good and become more active. All movements are slow, smooth and, with a little resistance and focus on the upper body, encourage improved movement while balance is developed with simple dance steps. Bubbles are used for breathing exercises (try it – you have to breathe correctly and deeply to blow bubbles, and what fun!). Laughter increases endorphins and that ➔



Left to right: Julia Williams, Mariana (volunteer) and Eddie

Spirit and Destiny

...continued from page 1



Left to right: Julia, Roz (volunteer), Eddie, Mariana (volunteer), Bill and Terry

feel-good factor. Simple exercises are changed – leis are donned for a trip to Hawaii with hula dances, Shirley Bassey's "Big Spender" is the perfect excuse to wrap in a boa and strut your stuff – and they do! Water breaks are a key component – not just a time to rest and re-hydrate but to socialise, share experiences, gather hospice information and copies of the opening movements to practise at home.

Benefits of Lebed

Published studies in the USA have established strong psychological benefits of The Lebed Method (TLM) and improved range of movement scales. Evaluating a six-week course, all my clients gave positive feedback. Comments included: "It always makes me feel upbeat even if my mood is low", "TLM is a great way of helping cancer patients to discuss feelings, and to regain movements in our limbs". All reported improvement in physical condition, balance and range of motion; some clients also reported improved breathing and walking.

In March 2007 I went to Chicago to train with Sherry Lebed as a Lebed Method instructor trainer. Since I completed the training, Trinity Hospice has hosted three Lebed Method trainings, and I have also taught new

instructors in the Midlands and Essex. Lebed Method classes are now being established in several UK hospices, in cancer services, pain management programmes and older people's services.

The Lebed Method is staying one step ahead. The UK

government's cancer reform strategy emphasises survivorship – The Lebed Method calls for 'thriving not just surviving'. ■

Links and resources

- For details of Lebed Method Instructor training (UK) contact Julia Williams, email: julia-lebed@tiscali.co.uk or call +44 (0)7734511287
- Trinity Hospice programme www.trinityhospice.org.uk

For published articles visit

- www.lebedmethod.com
- Abstract of poster presentation made at the 7th Palliative Care Congress, 29 April - 1 May 2008, Glasgow. Williams JM, Giovino M, Wilkinson J. Living every moment at Trinity Hospice – The Lebed Method of Movement and Dance: Improving quality of life in palliative care. *End of Life Care*, May 2008 Vol. 2 (2) p58.

Hospice information service - new telephone number

Our enquiry line number is now: **+44 (0)20 7520 8222**. Please see the enclosed flyer for more information.

Editor's note

Welcome to the autumn issue of the *Hospice Information Bulletin*. In just 16 pages you can travel from the Isle of Man to Ecuador, India and Bangladesh; you can sample fun and therapy in a south London hospice, and find out how a new job role supports patients and their families in choosing their future care. And that's just for starters.

Have you ever thought of contributing? I am sure that behind the door of every hospice or palliative care service there is a story to tell, or perhaps an example of good practice that could be shared with others. Please think about contributing – £50 worth of vouchers for Help the Hospices publications are waiting if your full-page article is published! Please contact me if you would like to discuss an idea.

Thank you so much to everyone who has contributed to this issue – writers, staff team and volunteers.

Avril Jackson

email: a.jackson@helthehospices.org.uk

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Staff team:

Avril Jackson,
Melanie Hodson,
Daniel Ward and Anne Mason.

We are located at two sites:
Hospice information service, Help the Hospices Hospice House
34-44 Britannia Street
London WC1X 9JG, UK.

Hospice information service, St Christopher's
51-59 Lawrie Park Road
London SE26 6DZ, UK.

Tel: +44 (0)7520 8222
Email: info@helthehospices.org.uk
Website: www.helthehospices.org.uk/hospiceinformation

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