

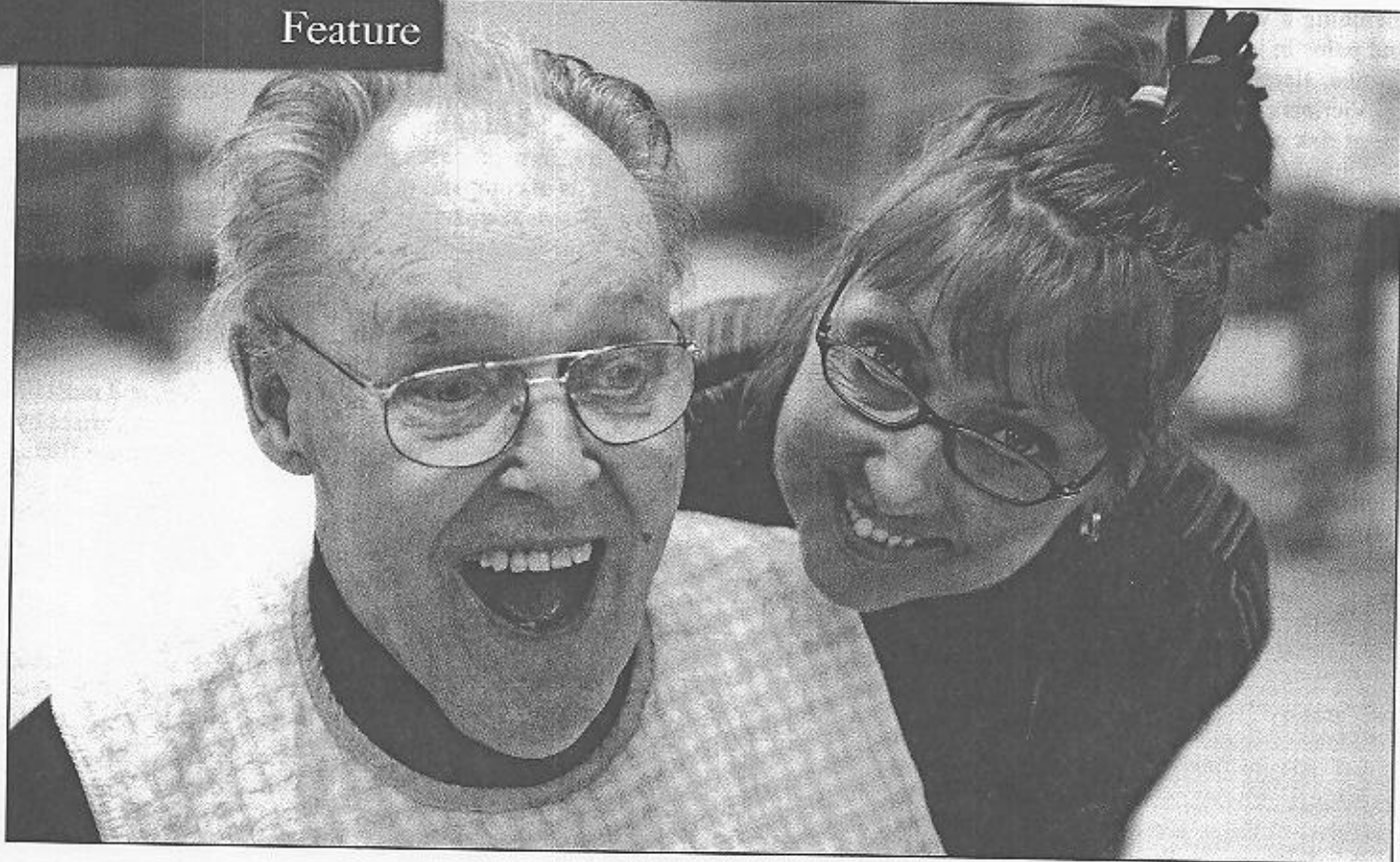
SENIOR CARE

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Second Quarter 2009



Being

An approach to dementia care

by Bernadette deSantis

Thirteen years ago, David Sheard revolutionized dementia care in the UK when he set out on a journey to put person centred care into practice. In February, Sheard shared his radical new approach with Canadian caregivers at the 23rd annual People and Progress Continuing Care Conference in Edmonton.

The theme of this year's conference, organized by CapitalCare, the country's largest public continuing care provider, was Linking Culture to Care. Sheard's presentation focused on shifting the culture of dementia care from what he calls "the social warehousing of seniors" to one of true person-centered care.

Sheard's approach focuses on "being" person centered and advances the ground-breaking work of Professor Tom Kitwood, whose 1997 book *Dementia Reconsidered: the Person Comes First* introduced the concept of person centered care.

Being is also the name of Sheard's book, published by the Alzheimer's Society, for whom Sheard is also a training

consultant. Sheard stressed that being person centered is not something we do, but something we feel.

"We spend life as a human being, not as a human doing," Sheard told delegates. "Being feeling based starts with ourselves. We need people who love or care for us to not just do things to us. We need a real connection, for people to have a sense of who we are, to feel how we are affected," Sheard said.

Sheard, who is director of Dementia Care Matters, an independent sector team which works with the Division of Health and Social Care at the University of Surrey, where he is also a visiting Senior Fellow, believes that what is needed in dementia care today is not more standards and policies, but rather a retraining of staff and management in being person centered.

Sheard went on to describe the person centered dementia care practices he and his team introduced in 1995 at Merevale House, a private residential care home for 35 people with dementia in Warwickshire, UK.

At Merevale House there are no secure units and no "staff," only "people who work there and people who live there." The people who work at Merevale are trained to be "butterflies," flitting about the centre, interacting with residents, and *being* with them, in whatever headspace the residents are currently

living in. When residents want to wake up, they do. When they want to eat, they can. There is very little evidence of tasks, routines, schedules, policies, systems and risk assessments, even though they do exist.

"Being person centered means focusing on soft skills rather than competencies," says Sheard. "We have to strip off the professional mask and unleash the emotion in ourselves."

Merevale House is recognized by the National Care Standards Commission in the UK. An inspection report conducted by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in April, 2007, shows Merevale House meets or exceeds all the national minimum standards required. In terms of what the care home does well, the inspector wrote:

The people living in this home have excellent support to live ordinary and meaningful lives and to participate in and contribute to the community in which they live.

Sheard admits the model of care established at Merevale didn't happen overnight and warned nurse managers that changing the culture of a complex organization would take, "leadership who can lead from the heart, and staff who want to really connect with people with dementia."

"For any large organization, changing cultures is difficult and takes passion, commitment, teamwork and substantial time," Sheard said. "Most training in person centered care tends to focus services on what to do and how to do it. *Being* is not something services can provide, but instead is something that first has to be felt."

"For someone receiving support, being person centered essentially means being treated as a whole human being – as an individual," Sheard wrote in the *Journal of Dementia Care* in January/February, 2008.

"For a family member or friend, giving person centered support will involve feeling the experience from the perspective of the person they are supporting," he continued. "For nurses and care workers, being person centred involved getting into someone else's shoes."

"This means respecting each individuals past life and being supportive to a person's present feelings," Sheard stated.

"For an organization, being person centered is about creating a culture where the service brings out the best in individual staff and those receiving the service."

Sheard continues, "This involves enabling people living and working together to develop a feeling-based service, almost like a family or a community. This is a service with no artificial boundaries, which does not create a 'them and us' culture, but is somewhere where people living and working together are like an extended family."

"People who have these attributes are not threatened by feelings but share the philosophy that 'Feelings Matter Most.' Such people have no barriers, no outdated ideas about professionalism and most important, no pretence. They have not only learned to talk the talk of person centered care, but they walk the walk and it exudes from their very being."

Evaluations from delegates to the People and Progress Continuing Care Conference were overwhelmingly positive.

"I'm sure that David has given all of us the inspiration we need to re-examine how we provide care to our dementia residents," wrote one delegate. "I was struck by his commitment and compassion and I am very excited to start planning how to incorporate his message at my facility."

Sheard's organization, Dementia Care Matters, in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society Quality Care Team, has published a series of books on person centered care:

Being – an approach to life and dementia;

Enabling – quality through real observation of people's daily lives;

Inspiring – real leadership and not just management of dementia care;

Nurturing – support for emotions at work;

Growing – an effective learning and development approach to being person centred;

The CapitalCare Foundation's People and Progress Continuing Care Conference is held annually in Edmonton, Alberta. Next year's conference is scheduled for February 4-5, 2010. Visit www.capitalcare.net for more information in Fall 2009.

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Coming Events

July 5 – 9, 2009 – Paris, France

19th International Association of Gerontology
World Congress
bforette@noos.fr
www.paris2009.org

August 31, 2009 – Montreal, QC

2009 Annual Scientific Meeting: Treating the Untreatable?
Canadian Academy of Geriatric Psychiatry
(416) 921-5443 info@cagp.ca

September 1-5, 2009 – Montreal, QC

14th International Congress: Path to Prevention
Int'l Psychogeriatric Assoc
www.ipa2009montreal.com



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