

Let's Talk About Dementia Conference

SDWG and NDCAN members were pleased to participate in a one day conference in Glasgow on Monday 27 March entitled 'Let's Talk About ... Dementia'. The event was aimed at professionals working in health and social care settings and anyone involved in working with older people with dementia and their families. The conference was designed to provide fresh knowledge updates; a better understanding; and practical strategies and ideas to support the care of people with dementia.

The conference offered a packed programme with contributions from, amongst others, a Dementia Nurse Lead Specialist; a Senior Dementia Consultant; a Consultant in Dental Public Health; and an Advanced Practice Care Home Dietitian.

The audience heard about dementia and delirium; was told about the importance of good oral health for people living with dementia; was provided with information on eating well when living with dementia; received insights and advice for communicating effectively with people with dementia; and got tips on matters including sight and hearing loss and dementia.



Margaret McCallion, SDWG, and Marion Ritchie, NDCAN, brought the conference to a close by offering personal perspectives of 'What I Wish You Knew About Dementia and Me'. Margaret spoke about her dementia journey from pre-diagnosis to now; she highlighted her experience of being told to give up work even before receiving her final diagnosis, and of the challenges she faced navigating an alien and impersonal benefits system through the Department of Work & Pensions.

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Margaret advocated for the importance of person-centred support and spoke about how from her initial contact with Alzheimer Scotland through to her current membership of the Scottish Dementia Working Group and European Working Group of People with Dementia she has regained her sense of self-worth. Margaret closed by reminding the audience that she was more than just someone living with dementia, and encouraged the audience to 'always see the person as a person'.



Marion spoke about grief from the point of view of a carer and highlighted that what is often diagnosed as depression can in reality be guilt and grief – what starts as anticipatory grief can become complicated grief if not recognised and treated. She spoke about her experience and journey as a carer and highlighted the grief cycle and the emotions and feelings that can repeat and return. The audience heard that grief is a complex process which needs more research and acknowledgement and Marion called for better support and understanding for those living with a dementia diagnosis and their family. Marion closed by welcoming opportunities, such as those provided by the conference, for professionals looking after people with dementia in hospitals and care homes to learn and train, and called for similar opportunities for carers looking after a loved one at home. We also hosted an information stand throughout the day which provided an opportunity for Marion, Margaret and NDCAN member, Maureen Huggins, to engage on a one-to-one basis with care professionals from across Scotland, and to promote the work of and provide information from the SDWG, NDCAN and Alzheimer Scotland.