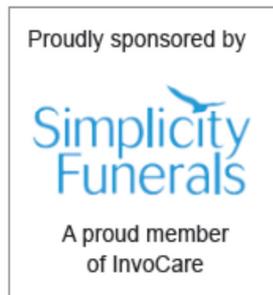




Older People Speak Out
Promoting the value of older people

LIFE TIMES



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THEY FEED US, DRESS US AND CLEAN US... BUT WHAT FOR?

Many years ago this was the plea from the hostel and nursing home residents and their families, and from respite centres. They protested.... There has to be a reason to get up in the morning!

It was obvious that there was an urgent need. Long hours alone can only add to the grief of losing one's active life style. Giving up, refusing to join in are all part of this grief.

The answers, of course, developed as the demand grew. ..and hopefully today there would be few centres and hostels and nursing homes that do not provide plenty of such activities.

There is such a huge variety of fun activities that there can be no excuse for feeling alone or left out of life.

In some instances staff even having residents putting on plays, using a well-known fairy story as a base. They put on an afternoon performance for their grandchildren.

Older People Speak Out has produced lots of activity ideas for seniors in book form. Our books are available for \$10. Phone 3219 2572 to order

Val French

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Editorial Team

Editor: Val French AM and Lauren Lucas

Website: <http://www.opso.com.au/life-times/>

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Cancers of digestive system claim one Australian life every 45 minutes

Survival rates amongst Australians diagnosed with the most common form of cancer are so low that one life is now claimed every 45 minutes, according to new figures released today by the GI Cancer Institute (GICI). The review found that the five-year survival prognosis for the 67 Australians diagnosed with a gastro-intestinal (GI) cancer each day is less than 50 per cent.

GI cancers affect the digestive system and include cancers of the oesophagus, gallbladder, liver, pancreas, stomach, small intestine, bowel (large intestine/colon and rectum) and anus. The analysis of Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) survival data reveals an even more concerning outcome for specific GI cancers, particularly pancreatic cancer (a mere 6.1% chance of five year survival); liver cancer (16.1%); oesophageal cancer (17.5%); gallbladder / bile duct cancer (18.5%); and stomach cancer (27%).

Chair of the GI Cancer Institute and Australasian Gastro-Intestinal Trials Group (AGITG) Associate Professor Tim Price expressed his disappointment and despair at the low survival rate for GI cancers, noting that the five-year survival rate for prostate cancer is 92 per cent and 89.4 per cent for breast cancer.¹ “It’s a double-edged sword. The coloured ribbons associated with some cancers has served to raise awareness and funds but it may have masked the realities of other forms of cancer.” He acknowledged that inroads were being made to improve the diagnosis, treatment and outcomes of bowel cancer, but noted that “the picture for GI cancers as a whole is bleak”.

“The reality is that more research is needed across the GI cancer arena if we’re to improve survival rates. This is a problem that won’t fix itself,” he added. Through donations, the GICI funds clinical trials conducted by the Australasian GastroIntestinal Trials Group (AGITG) that seek to improve the treatment of people living with GI cancer across Australia.

This year, more than 1,500 Australians will participate in AGITG clinical trials. One of these studies, known as INTEGRATE, was conceived, designed and led by Australian oncologists to measure the effect of a new medicine on cancers of the oesophagus and stomach.

These researchers are now finalising trial results for presentation at the world’s largest cancer meeting in Chicago in June. “It’s a simple equation – the more funding we receive for clinical trials, the more trials we can run across Australia. This increases access and delivers a greater chance of survival to more Australians,” Associate Professor Price said.

This year, almost 25,000 Australians will be diagnosed with a GI cancer and more than 12,000 people will die from the disease. The GI Cancer Institute will this week launch a national awareness campaign, known as Here to Here, which seeks to draw attention to the fact that a lot of ground must be covered to bring GI cancer survival rates up to those of prostate and breast cancer.

Article courtesy of the GI Cancer Institute

The Pursuit of Happiness

By Amy Freund

70-year-old Eltham resident Martin Hengeveld has just completed a trip of a lifetime, travelling over 1800 kilometres by bicycle to Brisbane in memory of his late wife



You don't come across such a spirit and soul in every lifetime. One that lives as much for the earth as for another being.

Or two beings.

This is his journey.

Traveling on an average of 106km a day, Martin Hengeveld cycled the unthinkable in honour of his late wife Marleen. Married for over thirty-nine years, Martin and Marleen's happily ever after fell tragically short when she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

Donning a pair of weathered blue painters pants, a singlet top and all-purpose runners, Martin hopped onto his 25 year old bike that had seen many happy memories with Marleen, setting off from his home in Eltham with a swag and a bright orange flag saying beat dementia duct taped to the back, ready for the arduous month-long cycle to the northern tip of Brisbane.

Some people, like his now wife Catherine, may think that this journey is insane for anyone to complete, let alone a 70 year-old, yet Martin sees it quite differently.

“It all came out when we [Catherine and I], were grey-nomading last year. Catherine saw these long distance cyclists and said ‘God those people must have rocks in their head to do that!’ and I sort of gave her a look and she then realised that there was something going on in my head, and I said ‘Well I must have rocks in my head!’ Martin laughed.

Dementia is an illness that sneaks up on the most unsuspecting victim and latches onto their fondest memories, happiest moments and quietest thoughts, turning them into all but blurs of forgotten ideas and stolen moments.

Seated next to his now wife Catherine, Martin recalls the memory of his late wife, and the tribute to her as being the driving force behind his solo trip.

Coming from Holland, it was natural for the pair to enjoy a sunny afternoon cycling through the rustic outskirts of Eltham. “You’re literally born on a bicycle,” Martin laughed, “and with Alzheimer’s, the best thing to do with it is to do exercise; so cycling was right up Marleen’s alley until one day, she forgot where the brakes were, going down the hill, and I screamed “put on the brakes quick!” And, she crashed and broke her arm. That was the end of the cycling.” Martin remembers.

“So in some ways, this is a pilgrimage as much as it is a trip in memory of her. I have a little flag on the bike saying beat dementia, in honour of the experience of looking after Marleen for about 7 years.” Martin said.

According to fightdementia.org, an Australian is diagnosed with dementia every 6 minutes, with over 342,800 Australians currently living with dementia, a number that is expected to increase to 400,000 in less than ten years.

Dementia can affect individual’s at any age, with approximately 25,100 people in Australia diagnosed with Young Onset Dementia, which can affect people as young as 30.

As much as dementia can take from a person, there is a glimmer of hope; the one thing that transcends the loss of memories is the instinct of love.

“It was a really special time in a way. There’s no sort of bickering, which with newlywed couples you’re bound to get,” Martin said.

“The notion of love becomes very unconditional, and you just accept whatever’s going on with your partner, and all you want to do is care for each other. And on that sort of basis, you can have a wonderful time.

It wasn’t necessarily a bad experience,” Martin said, his kind eyes frosting with fond memories from the past. “We got to terms with it [Alzheimer’s],

fairly early in the piece, and we thought, well from here on, ok you've got so many years, let's make the most of it.

We even had times of dancing around the table here," he said as he gestured to the large dark oak we were seated around; a table that had seen many family dinners, parties and even at times, sorrow filled silent evenings. "It was a very special time."

In her memoirs "You Will Find Me Under The Oak Tree," Marleen speaks of her frustration with the illness through her trusty scribe, along with the heartaches and tireless efforts of Martin and her struggle to find help.

In Martin's own autobiography, "The Art of Being," written during the time of her illness, he speaks of Marleen's spirit though the illness and indeed her life: "Fortunately, deep within her make-up, there is a will which won't allow her to chuck it in without a fight."

Fourteen years on, Martin's love still stays true, proving all the critics wrong by beating his original target of a month to get to his destination. By completing his pilgrimage in only sixteen days, he arrived in Brisbane, more than two weeks ahead of schedule to the surprise of long lost family.

Martin returned to the newest chapter in his life, reuniting with his wife Catherine in Melbourne almost two weeks from when he set off. Welcoming him back with loving gestures and the sweet aroma of heart-warming cauliflower soup, Catherine could only describe his journey as "amazing."

Over this two-week pilgrimage, Martin has been described as amazing, unbelievable, and a true testament to the age-old saying that age is, really, just a number.

But to me Martin is, and always will be, someone who I am proud to call my uncle.

If anyone would like to donate to the research and study of dementia, please visit www.vic.fightdementia.org.au

The next OPSO Forum will be on Wednesday 10th June and will have a guest speaker to talk about the NDIS.

It is at the Southern Cross Sports Club, Corner of Logan & Klumpp Rd Upper Mount Gravatt and will start at 10am



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Entries close 2 October 2015

A protest goes digital

A new petition on Change.org is calling for the government to stop cuts to funding for thousands of disabled pensioners, forcing them out of our homes and only giving them eight weeks' notice.

Margot Harker has said in her petition "It fills me with fear. One side of my body is paralysed from a stroke, writing this is really hard – but I need your help. I can't believe the government is doing this. I'm working very hard to recover from a stroke that means I need carers to help me around home. But last month I was informed that my home care funding plan will be changed from July 1 – which means I have to come up with thousands of dollars in contributions in a few weeks or be forced into an aged care facility."

The government is maintaining it will not be reducing funding but will review individual cases to ensure they are not adversely affected by the new arrangements.

Recipients will be moved from federally-funded Home Care Packages to a program called Consumer Directed Care. The funding will come as individual packages rather than as block funding to service providers, leading some recipients to fear they will receive less funding and fewer hours of care.

Assistant Minister for Social Services Senator Mitch Fifield said funding had not been reduced but he would review the complaints.

"I'm going to put in place a system to assess, on a case-by-case basis, circumstances where people have been told they are going to get less than they were getting before, which shouldn't be the case," he told ABC Brisbane 612.

The petition can be found here <https://www.change.org/p/tony-abbott-i-m-recovering-from-a-stroke-don-t-force-me-and-thousands-of-disabled-pensioners-out-of-our-homes>

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