

Message from the Chief Executive



**December
in rural Northumberland**

“The weather outside is frightful, but the care is so delightful!” A warm welcome to readers and a little artistic licence I know but as the memories of Christmas festivities fade we can look back on the period of early winter, the coldest winter on record and the shocking conditions it brought and which we battled through.

As snow fell on snow and with no imminent prospect of thaw, staff reported being stuck in snow, skidding, not enough road gritting, appalling driving conditions and sadly the odd bump. With no one injured, however, I was relieved and proud as ever as the staff made efforts above and beyond in order to ensure that care was delivered to our clients.

2010 was definitely a defining year for PPHCare. Early in the year, saw the resignation of one of our Regional Managers and our remaining Regional Manager going on maternity leave rather earlier than originally planned. So with two Managers down, Julie and Mary (with broken wrist I seem to recall) took up the slack until our staffing levels recovered.

After the birth of her baby, our remaining Regional Manger has now decided not to come back to work and as you will see over the

page the Staff News will bring you up to date with resulting changes. 2010 was also the year of the CQC. Formerly known as CSCI, government changes decreed that all care providers had to go through a laborious process of re-registration. We had to wait on tenterhooks for our ‘window’ of application, then make sure that we had everything in order for the application. As it happens our re-registration was without any complication although the entire process must have been at enormous cost to the taxpayer and I wonder what the benefits will be to either ourselves or our clients?

We also worked very closely with Local Authority commissioners to improve our internal audit process, recording and analysing procedures. This is as well as our monitoring of staff, using supervision to aid retention and ensuring that staff make the most of their training opportunities.

My personal reflections on 2010 are happy. I am still going strong, the family is fit and well and I have much to be thankful for. Clearly this is not the same for everyone and I also remember those who are out of work, struggling to cope and wondering about the possibility of further recession this year. I am pleased to report that we are still recruiting and offering opportunities to people who want to work. Training of our staff now requires some of them (in specialist fields) to attend more than a dozen training courses a year and the number is set to rise!

My children already talk of the summer and holidays. They are a little tired of sledging and the cold. I tell them not to wish their lives away (and my money!).

What do I wish for in 2011? Forgive me sounding like a beauty queen but would peace and security for all of us be too much to ask?

Within reach would be to lose weight and improve my health and fitness. I am starting a new diet; it is called ‘portion control’, and Julie insists I cut down on all carbs. That’s all my favourites out of the window including mashed and roast potatoes and bread. As you can tell (by my waistline) that I do like my staple foods. Julie’s a stickler and won’t overlook cake and biscuits either — its easier for her, she just doesn’t like them!!

So my friends, as we all enter 2011, I may be hungry, but the team will continue to deliver the best care we can, out and about in our hired Range Rover, going boldly into the far reaches of the North East attending to as many clients as we can regardless of the weather.

This year, please continue to submit your favourite recipes, jokes, stories and ideas for articles, or you are destined to continue to read my own ramblings.....

Julie, myself and all of our team wish you all the very best for 2011 and thank you again for your continued support.

With my best wishes

Philip



Your Health

Eczema

This common skin condition currently affects one in 12 adults in the UK, as well as babies and young children. If you are unfortunate to suffer it can deteriorate during the winter months but there are some things you can do to which might help.

Try to Relax: Stress can affect our immune system which can have an impact on our skin. Try to relax for 10 minutes every day.

Turn the heating down at night: Sweating can cause irritation so keep your bedroom cool at around 18°.

Exercise: This can help to keep eczema-stimulating stress levels under control. Wear loose fitting cotton clothes to avoid sweat irritation and take a cool shower afterwards.

Change your washing powder: to a non-bio and cut down on chemical irritation.

Try not to scratch: You will only make the skin crack and bleed which will take longer to heal.

Don't be tempted by a hot bath: but the heat, water and soap will dry out your skin and aggravate it. Opt for a warm shower instead and pat dry without rubbing.

Lose weight: Gravitational eczema is caused by poor circulation and varicose veins which can be affected by excess weight.

Eat a healthy balanced diet: Consult a dietician or nutritionist before giving up any food groups which you may suspect of causing allergic flare ups.

From the World Wide Web

Want to Live Longer ?

- +1 Year Laugh regularly to relax and reduce stress levels.
- +1—3 Eat breakfast. Gives you more energy for the day.
- +2 Get a Pet. Can lower heart rate and blood pressure.
- +4 Enjoy Sex. Reduces the risk of heart disease.
- +6 Brush and Floss daily. Healthy gums cut risks of heart disease and diabetes.
- +7 Stay in love. Married couples outlive the divorced, widowed or unmarried.
- +9 Be positive. If your glass is half full you will be healthier and recover from illness more quickly.

Good luck with that!

Mr George Ross receives an unexpected visit from Santa's helpers in December delivering gifts and a big thank you for being one of our clients. Mary and Jamie are so looking forward to next Christmas, They just love dressing up!



Laugh?

I was hysterical!

The womb, or uterus, is a vital part of the female reproductive system. It is a very small organ until required by pregnancy when it can stretch to accommodate a growing baby then contract to deliver it.

The Ancient Greeks thought that the womb could 'wander' around the body causing unruly emotions. The condition was termed 'hysteria' after their word for womb 'hystera'.

The Greeks of course, didn't know everything and clearly the womb doesn't 'move around'. Although it does grow in size it is held in place by ligaments.

Staff News

Donna Wright is appointed Senior Carer.

Donna lives in Newcastle and works in Chester le Street, Durham and Newcastle areas. She has established herself as one of our "Can Do" staff as her reply is usually "No probs!".



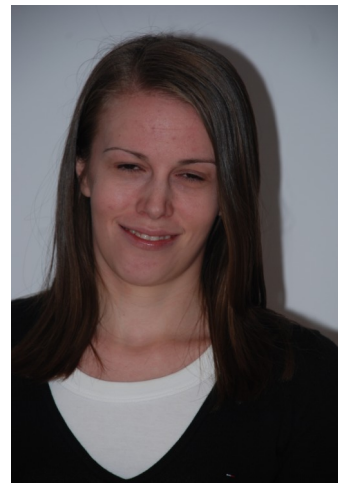
Sam Bright is appointed Assistant Manager

Recognising Sam's commitment and hard work over the last six months, she is fully up to date with her mandatory training and this year will complete her NVQ Level 3.



Rachael Hay is appointed Quality Control Executive

Rachael is a graduate who has spent the last six months at Head Office getting to grips with Quality Control systems which will be rolled out this year to the region.



Coffee Break

Submitted by Ms Philippa Douglas

The house was ordinary. It had been at the corner of the street longer than anyone could remember. No one seemed to live there, the windows had been boarded up years ago and the garden was a mess. The postman called about twice a year and the boy who delivered the local free newspaper would walk down the path and shove the folded newspaper through the dark green letter box, without caring whether it was read or not. The letterbox was very small in comparison to what had once been a very large panelled door, reflecting a more grand age.

The house itself was distinctly Georgian with pillars supporting a copper canopy above the entrance, the copper having gained that green weathered tinge almost a perfect match for the letter box.

Neighbours had often gossiped about seeing a light inside the house occasionally, but that was many years ago. The light was rarely seen now

and no one noticed because many of the older residents had moved. Their houses had been converted into flats; now only rented by local students and other people just passing through. The street was no longer a place that people wanted to settle in. No one was interested, no one noticed the house. Who cared? People had their own lives to lead.

Sunday afternoons in Marlborough Street were, however, still a fairly pleasant affair. With nothing else to do, Penny and Lorna played outside. If the weather was mild, students would dare to arrange barbeques and loud music would shout into the street.

Ray Wood was the elderly gentleman from number 12 whose belly prevented him from seeing his feet and always appeared before him on a corner by at least eight inches.

Ray and the two girls watched the man in a sharp suit that opened the garden gate of the corner house, walked down the path and knocked smartly on the faded door. A few seconds passed by, the man knocked again. Amazingly, the door opened, just an inch and then

a little wider, just enough to allow the man entry.

Penny and Lorna ran into their garden almost tripping over each other to tell their parents. Ray, looked dazed but then gathering his weight he too waddled off to Ken's across the street to pass on the news. Ken had lived in the street longer than anyone, some six years. He would really want to know thought Roy.

It was three twenty in the afternoon when the man in the suit left, closed the faded door and again walked smartly down the path, passed through the gate and turned into Shepherd Road and was gone.

No one saw him leave. It was five when Ray left Ken's and the sun's shadows crept like fingers across the street eventually bringing night to Marlborough Street whose residents slumbered peacefully, unaware of the changes that were to follow very soon.

To Be Continued.....

Cookery Corner

Easy Baked Vegetables



Thanks to Monica from Hebburn for this tasty delicious and healthy recipe which allows you plenty of time to sit sown and enjoy your pre-lunch drink. You can relax about the washing up too, as the vegetables are baked in a foil parcel!

Method

All you do is fold the piece of foil in half, then lay one half along the length of the roasting tray, brush it with a little of the vinaigrette, and lay all the vegetables on the foil on the tray.

Season them well with salt and freshly milled black pepper.

Add the sprigs of herbs and the bay leaf, then spoon the remaining vinaigrette over and toss all the vegetables around so they get a good coating – you'll need to do this quite carefully so as not to break the foil.

Now fold over the other half of the foil and turn over all the edges 2 or 3 times to seal it all round. What you should end up with is a parcel that fits the tray exactly but with some air space between the foil and vegetables.

When you're ready to cook the vegetables, place them in the pre-heated oven at 200°C or gas mark 6, one shelf higher than the middle, for 45 minutes. To serve, carefully unwrap the foil and tip the vegetables into a warm serving dish.

Ingredients

- 13 oz baby carrots
- 13 oz parsnips sliced
- 12 oz red potatoes cut into chunks
- 3 sticks of celery cut into 10cm pieces
- 1 medium onion cut into chunks
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 1 bottle pre made vinaigrette

Smile!

A woman went to the police station with her next-door neighbour to report that her husband was missing. The policeman asked for a description.

She said, "He's 35 years old, 6 foot 4, has dark eyes, dark wavy hair, an athletic build, weighs 185 pounds, is soft-spoken and is good to the children."

The next-door neighbour protested, "Your husband is 5 foot 4, chubby, bald, has a big mouth and is mean to your children."

The woman replied, "Yes, but who wants HIM back?"