

Public health palliative care at the Edinburgh International Book Festival: a collaborative approach

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Introduction

The Edinburgh International Book Festival (EIBF) attracts audiences from around the world. This year, the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care, St Columba's Hospice Edinburgh and Marie Curie Hospice Edinburgh were offered a large 'outdoor room' for a weekend as part of the "Reading the Last Chapter" series of events. We collaborated in using this space in several ways and one or more of us was generally present to talk to visitors, if they wished.

Information and activities

Exhibition

"It Takes a Village" by Colin Gray and the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care is a powerful series of portraits and personal stories exploring the idea that as someone's health deteriorates, care and support can come in many guises



Great exhibition showcasing quite a few of the 'behind the scenes' jobs that people do.

Beautifully done – made me realise all the dimensions of caring. Thank you.

Brilliant exhibition! Keep up the good work. Happened to chance upon this with my son, so am hoping it opens his eyes to care for us when the time comes :-)

Members of the public viewing the "It Takes a Village" exhibition

Conversations

Two "Death Lunches" were facilitated by staff from Marie Curie Hospice and staff from both hospices were available at other times. Some very moving conversations took place and the "Death Lunches" were positively evaluated.



Words people used to describe their experience of our Death Lunch

Thought-provoking, Relieving, Shared experiences, Insightful, Helpful, Therapeutic, Fascinating, Positive, Interesting, Reinforcing, Supportive, Relaxed

52nd & 53rd August 2017

Edinburgh International Book Festival

Words participants used to describe the "Death Lunches"

Information resources

A variety of Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief resources were available, including information leaflets on a range of topics (e.g. 'How to help someone close to you who has been bereaved'), and an origami game to encourage Advance Care Planning.



Inheritance Books

People were invited to write down which book they inherited or would like to pass on and why this book means a lot to them. Completed postcards were displayed during the weekend.



A post-war copy of the Good Housekeeping Guide

To the useful, sensible info my mother contributed marginalia: "Yummy!", "Don't try this", "Takes 10 mins longer" etc. I hear her voice still. Now, I add my comments and hope the next owner will continue the tradition.

A Child's Garden of Verses by Robert Louis Stevenson

My gran bought this book for me when I was sick with chicken pox aged 6 ½. I remember her reading it to me and later reading it myself.

Charlie the Chimney Sweep

My granny that died gave it to me

A Grief Observed by CS Lewis

A moving account of being alongside someone at the end of life

Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom

The wisdom jumps off the page at you, a refreshing reminder of what is really important in life and what many lose sight of in their daily life

Display of completed cards with "inheritance books"

St Columba's Hospice taking part in Edinburgh Doors Open Day

Posters and postcards advertising this were available and given to local visitors along with a verbal invitation and a request to help spread the word.



Reflections

The opportunity to engage in health promoting palliative care at the Edinburgh International Book Festival worked well. A wide range of conversations took place – some people shared their own stories, some spoke about current situations with relatives who were seriously ill, others found out about how hospice referrals can be made. Several people found that sad emotions were triggered by coming along, which we hope we were able to acknowledge and validate.

Websites

- www.stcolumbahospice.org.uk
- www.mariecurie.org.uk
- www.palliativecarescotland.org.uk
- www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk



L-R: Andrew, Danuta, Brigid

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