

Our Doctor Writes

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Recently I've been thinking about how valuable it is to live in small communities, where everybody knows most of their neighbours and cares about their wellbeing. I've also been acutely aware that sometimes, not often, the elderly in particular end up in hospital because there is no locally available better option. Quite often in General Practice there is a need for someone to have fairly intensive input to help with daily living and to just be there when a member of the community is vulnerable.

Recently there has been a change in the provision of local services by the PCT and the introduction of neighbourhood teams. Often this change works really well with an integrated approach from the district nurses, the occupational therapists and the physiotherapists. Appropriate equipment such as commodes, grab rails and even a hospital bed can be in the home in double quick time. This combined with the overwatch of a GP can help to look after people in their own home rather than there needing to be an unnecessary admission to hospital. Hospitals can be an invaluable resource but all too often the wrong people are admitted. In such a situation there are lots of reasons why this is far from ideal.

What the neighbourhood team can't deliver though is for someone to go in to check everything is OK more than a couple of times a day. Night sitting is nigh impossible unless a patient is terminally ill and then the Marie Curie service comes into its own. The link scheme in Bedwyn works really well when transport is required for those who lack it and would be disadvantaged or vulnerable because of it. I would like to explore whether or not there is the will for the generation of a group of friends in the villages who may be prepared to step into the breach when really needed and try to help at short notice to keep people in their homes when it is the best option.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Dr Tim Ballard