

Five minute introduction to the UKDC at Brighton, 11 November 2014

Family and friends used to wonder and ask why do I do all the activities which I do connected to raising awareness with regards to living with dementia. The answer remains the same and is quite simple. It is because of the people I meet and continue to be inspired by, be they professionals seeking to provide the best quality care and support they can, be it the person diagnosed as they valiantly attempt to maintain their personhood and self esteem despite the challenges they face, or be it those who love and care for us, and who share the laughter and the tears along the way. All these inspire me and help drive me to use what skills I have to support efforts to raise awareness of what living with dementia is really like.

I am delighted that DEEP and The Carers Call to Action are sharing this wonderful opportunity today by speaking with a united voice, a voice which will be heard and acted upon. Until April when my 81 year old mother died I had both perspectives, that of a person with a diagnosis and that of a son watching his mother as her Alzheimer's progressed. It is seldom easy for all sectors to "sing from the same hymn sheet" but when it happens the quality of the harmonies is so much richer and more successful.

Like all worthwhile and crucial campaigns and movements with encouragement both DEEP and Carers Call to Action are growing. They are growing in membership and consequently they are growing in influence. There is still a long way to go, but the signs are encouraging.

When Rachael and Rachel asked me to prepare a talk for this slot I felt humbled and privileged, but also excited. I was excited because I know that so many people are working closely together to make the lives of those affected by dementia as rich and fulfilling as is possible. There are so many outstanding features in this Congress programme that one really is spoilt for choice, and whilst I may have retained the ability to do many things being in two places at one time never was a skill I mastered despite my best efforts.

It is wonderful that this conference places those affected by dementia at the centre, giving us not only a voice but an ear to speak to and then your desire to act upon our explanation of what it is REALLY like to live as well as is possible for as long as is possible with dementia.

Keith Oliver
Canterbury
17 Oct 2014

One minute talk for UKDC Brighton, 11 November 2014

Whilst the Keith Oliver you see in front of you today is different to the one you may have heard last time, or the one who you may hear next time, there is still burning within me the desire and drive to use the skills, knowledge and experience I retain to help both professionals and those affected by dementia - be they those who like me have a diagnosis or, those like my wife who live with us.

I have been wrong so many times since being diagnosed on New Year's Eve 2010. I create around me a smoke screen to protect me and those who are close to me either as family or friends. I thought I was "bullet proof".

This may be the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, I can assure you that the dementia mist is neither fruitful or mellow. I thought that I could beat what Terry Pratchett refers to as "his embuggerance". But I can't, at least I can't without your help and support and professional love. With that, I can retain my personhood, my independence and my social skills or interdependence, and can ensure that the foggy days are few and far between and that the sun will shine to brighten the way ahead, not back.

Keith Oliver
Canterbury
16 October 2014