

“ The future belongs to those who take control of their own destiny today “

Ann Winder works every day with patients who would rather not talk about their conditions. She works within a field of medicine that people would rather gloss over and she works tirelessly to promote wellbeing on a subject that people would rather not hear about.

Ann grew up within a loving family and at the age of fifteen became the obligatory rebellious and difficult teenager. Her mother took action, and in order to get her back on the rails, she persuaded Ann to train as a nurse. After suitability interviews, which in the 1960's also involved interviewing the parents of applicants, she was accepted as a pre-nursing student. Ann, on the other hand, was not vastly interested in becoming a nurse and had aspirations of become an art teacher. However, not wanting to give up on anything and with continued encouragement from her parents, she stuck with it and finished her training at the Sheffield Nursing and Midwifery School to qualify as a registered nurse.

At Loge Moor Hospitals Spinal Unit in Sheffield, Ann quickly rose through the ranks from staff nurse to ward sister. This early training and experience was invaluable to Ann and she was now enjoying and appreciating the clinical practice and routines of the profession.

After her marriage ended she was forced to leave Sheffield and made a brand new start in Bristol. This work was with disabled neurological patients and whilst managing the unit she was awarded a Florence Nightingale Foundation Scholarship. This scholarship provides funding for nurses to promote innovation in practice abroad and to extend their knowledge and skills. Ann travelled to America to assess how a different healthcare structure cared for their neurological patients.

In the late 70s and early 80s, Ann commenced work in a new unit, the then called Bristol Ham Green Hospital, which has now developed into the Bristol Institute of Urology (BUI). It is here that her true metier was born. The pioneers and founders of this department were Professor Fenelly and Dr Shepperd who Ann believes she owes everything to; they were an inspirational and supportive pairing as was the rest of the staff.

In the 1980s, there was no agreed way to develop care for those with bladder problems. The research and equipment to care for patients was extremely limited. Ann became well known for her energy and enthusiasm on this subject. She was becoming well known for her work in Bristol as well as around the country. She understood that it was not a subject people would seek out without good cause. So she had to bring the subject to the people. Incontinence was a problem that millions of people were suffering from and very little was spoken or known about. She gave numerous lectures and presentations to professionals from all health areas and continuously educated the public. She was invited onto television and radio programmes, worked on training videos as well as writing extensively for health journals and magazines.

She was then awarded the Winston Churchill Fellowship. Similar to the Florence Nightingale Scholarship, the award provides funds to committed professionals that wish to learn from overseas cultures in order to enhance our own. Ann travelled to New Zealand to investigate their approach to continence care how they raised awareness for this growing health problem.

Over the years Ann has visited Sri Lanka to help establish the professional education and training for spinally injured patients with urological problems, Africa as part of the D.T.I. Britain means Business Enterprise and lectured in Italy and Australia. In Singapore, Ann worked on developing Continence care for Older People and more recently she secured a specialist twinning with a group in Barcelona. They will host their 3rd joint conference in April 2010.

At 50, Ann made a difficult decision to move to Hertfordshire in order to start building a new continence service within the county. Selling and leaving her well-loved home in the Wye Valley was hard enough but she did not know Hertfordshire, nor did anyone in Hertfordshire know her. Ann wanted a new challenge and this was an opportunity to drive the subject of continence even further.

Ann has now reached the top of her profession and is a senior manager within the NHS. When so many would think about retirement and perhaps taking a well deserved world cruise, Ann, at age 58, has decided to start her own business; a company that aims to promote and educate on this subject that few want to acknowledge. ARC Healthcare Management Consultants has been created to provide clinical training and education for individuals and organisations (www.arc-healthcare.com) within the field of continence.

Ann says, “If you are going to do anything you have to believe in yourself and toughly understand your topic” She is of course highly experienced in many aspects of management and leadership teaching but had never run a business before. With minimal funding and a wealth of knowledge behind her she needed the support of a business savvy individual outside of her speciality subject to inject ideas and spark new ways of working. A chance meeting at a Charity event led to her meeting Trevor Pile who now works in partnership with Ann. She says, “you need to know what you are good at and find the right person to do what they are good at, it helps to relieve the stress levels.”

Ann realises how tough it is to get established, especially during a downturn, despite already being known and respected throughout industry and the NHS.

A recent development for ARC Healthcare is working in partnership with a publishing company who produce the journal ‘Continence UK’. This partnership will help support and develop each other’s portfolio and encourage professionals to develop their skills.

ARC Healthcare is an innovative company, breaking new ground in the field of continence, so it is difficult to get healthcare providers think outside of their regular confines, especially in the NHS. ARC Healthcare could save NHS providers a great deal of money by contracting in clinical specialists for training and management purposes rather than retaining them as employees; it will help greatly towards capacity planning for the future.

The media present bladder abnormalities as if it’s a problem that people should just put up with and keep quiet about. Ann believes that it is clearly not acceptable to spend your life in fear of embarrassing yourself or not being able to enjoy the things you want to do. Ann’s aim for the company is clear: “to help all men and women suffering from bladder problems to have the right to see a health professional who will be either able to relieve their problems or direct them to other professional help and advice.” In a recent study it was identified that over 50% of nursing students qualifying are not trained to assess patients with bladder problems. Over 68% of post registered nurses do not feel they have the latest training to deal with such problems either.

Ann continues to work in a clinical specialist practice despite trying to develop her company in order to spread her skills as much as she can.

When it comes to continence care, it is important to not only have empathy with the patients but to keep up a strong sense of humour. Most people will ignore this subject matter little knowing that they may well be the next to suffer. 12% of the population suffer from bladder problems at least once in their lifetime. Ann says Arc Healthcare will continue to push the boundaries and they are determined not to give in. As her father says “never say Ann can’t do something; she’s as stubborn as a mule.”

Relevant links

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About ARC Healthcare Management Consultants.

Arc Healthcare is a unique quality provider of health education and management from clinical nurse specialist practising within the UK.

Arc Healthcare was one of the first providers in the UK to specialize in all aspects of bladder and bowel care, from both a clinical and managerial perspective.

These distressing and embarrassing conditions can affect all ages groups at various times of their lives, economically costing the health economy millions a year.

As many as 12 % of the population at some time will experience these problems.

Arc Healthcare aims are to ensure quality educational sessions are provided to all areas affiliated to this speciality both within the NHS and Private sectors. In addition to clinical knowledge ARC Healthcare offers providers of care expert managerial support in developing quality services, benchmark existing services and assisting with addressing local and National objectives in a proactive innovative ways.