

I am a specialist Irish art dealer and have been for the past 35 years. My late wife was a nursing sister on a cancer ward. She suffered — no, not "suffered": she had Alzheimer's for 14 years. From the day that she was diagnosed to the day that she died, she was never in a nursing home. She never had a urinary tract infection or a bedsore. I had the joy, pleasure and privilege of caring for her. That was rather special to me.

I want to give you a fourth "p", which, I think, is the key to caring: having a positive mental attitude. From the day that she was diagnosed, I took on board the responsibility for her care by communicating with the various consultants, doctors and the hospice. She was never in hospital.

The other exciting thing is that I discovered a wonderful mantra for caring. I have a friend who is an A&E consultant. We are very close, and I discovered that NHS is the key to being a good carer — nutrition, hygiene and stimulation. With "nutrition", you must be fussy about what you eat. With "hygiene", you must be meticulous: 90% of infection comes through the mouth. Ciaran said to me, "The last thing that you should do before you touch Elsie is wash your hands". That is what I did. The third thing in NHS is "stimulation". I made a positive point of getting her out of bed every day until the day that she died in my arms. She was even out of bed on that day. For the last three years, when she was in a wheelchair, I had the joy of monitoring how people treat those who are in a wheelchair. I found that they talk to the person pushing rather than to the person in the wheelchair.

I now volunteer for Belfast hospitality providers. I talk to cruise ship passengers who are coming back to the ship and get their feedback, so I ask them what was good about Belfast and what was bad. When I see a person in a wheelchair, I make a dive for them and talk to that person. They are just so pleased. Ladies and gentlemen, I encourage you in your world of caring. Use the NHS.