

# ANNUAL CONFERENCE - October 2008

## Creative Writing Workshop



Berlie Doherty, our patron kindly offered to run this workshop. Both sessions were well attended and enjoyed. On the feedback sheet people called the experience 'brilliant', 'refreshing', 'fantastic', 'excellent'. They also felt that Berlie's approach was soothing and gentle and they were surprised how much and how easily they managed to write; some even said they would have liked the session to be longer.

I went along with some trepidation for I am not a natural when it comes to writing; but I must say that some of the 'tricks of the trade' Berlie passed on helped me to focus and live through what I was writing just as if it were happening again. Like every good writer, I used my own experience and gave it that 'added extra', a little imagination. We were told to use all our senses – what did we hear, feel, smell, touch and of course see. We also learnt that writing in the present tense makes the story more vivid and the past tense is more reflective. So there are some tips for all you budding talents!

## Managing CFS/ME Workshop

The one hour workshop started on the principle that M.E. **is** a medical condition but he was not here to offer a cure, rather to look at the different aspects of managing the symptoms. This means focusing on taking back control of both physical and mental activities. As with all treatments, it starts with a series of questions, which approach is right for you at this moment in time? What are the roles of the people around you? Is there the support you may need? Thirdly, what are the emotional impacts? Learning to manage CFS/ME is to get control of the emotions and moods, to make changes to habits and the way you live. By choosing the right approach you can build skills and find the tools to increase confidence and these will remain with you, helping you carry on for life without therapists.

Mark Adams reflected on 3 therapies: Activity Management; Graded Exercise Therapy (GET) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). The key element to all 3 therapy approaches is **PACING – you cannot force progress.**

People were asked to look at the pros and cons of any of these particular therapies. Group discussion helped highlight misconceptions such as GET being exercises in the gym, when actually it can mean any form of movement, like just standing up from a bed or a chair, or going for a short walk. Evaluating the positives showed the need for reasonable levels of motivation, building confidence to keep going, the importance of doing something which is giving you back control of your life, even if progress is slow. Negative aspects were said to be price of therapy, the waiting times especially if going through the NHS and referrals by GPs.

Mark Adams currently practices at the NHS CFS/ME Clinic "Fairlawns", and the Hallamshire Physiotherapy Clinic.

## The Laughter Workshop

Jo Eadie who is a facilitator for the Laughter Network as well as an ME sufferer led the two sessions in a very relaxed and enjoyable manner. People comments stated that they thought he was an extremely nice person who brought us all together through laughter. They found that laughter is a good leveller and breaks down barriers. It relaxes the entire body and reduces stress and tension.

Adding my own experience to this, I must tell you that I was exhausted after all that effort of laughing but I would certainly do it again. To sum up, I would like to quote one of the comments:

‘Laughter is the best medicine, indeed; let’s laugh more!’

\*\*\*Interested in comedy and keeping the laughter flowing? You might want to note the local Comedy Club circuits such as the Last Laugh on Thursdays at The Lescar on Sharrow Vale Road, Fri/Sat The Roundhouse under Ponds Forge and at the Winding Wheel in Chesterfield (20<sup>th</sup> Nov/11<sup>th</sup> Dec). \*\*\*

## The Role of Fatty Acids in ME/CFS By Michèle

This workshop was given by Dr. Nina Bailey, a nutrition scientist working for Igennus.

The talk was quite technical and fast paced, one of the key points that Dr Bailey put across was that people with ME/CFS have an impaired ability to make omega-3 and omega-6 long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids due to the inhibition of the enzyme delta-6-desaturase. This in turn would affect the proper functioning of cell membranes.

Another interesting fact was that the brain is 70% fat. Lack of long chain fatty acids in the cell membrane will affect their fluidity and this will reduce optimal brain function affecting memory, concentration and learning. This could certainly help to explain the horrendous ‘brain fog’ that we all experience!

Points from audience discussion:

- Government recommends we eat 2 portions of fish per week – 1 white & 1 oily. Too much of a good thing can be potentially hazardous due to high levels of methyl mercury & dioxin in some fish.
- Tuna is not such a good source as a lot omega-3 is removed during the canning process, whereas Herring and Mackerel are rich in Omega-3 & EPA
- Big fish at the top of the food chain e.g. Cod tend to have more contamination as the pollutants accumulate.

For an extended copy of this report, workshop fact sheet from Dr. Bailey and/or copies of Dr. Basant Puri talk in May 2007, please send a SAE 42p.

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