



The intruder in our midst



I have just finished reading *The Accidental* by Ali Smith, about a family whose lives are changed dramatically by a strange girl – an intruder – who briefly

comes to stay with them. Her presence and behaviour makes each member of the family view their lives in a new light and they are changed forever by the visitation of this unexpected and uninvited person. In the same way we can view diabetes as the unexpected and uninvited ‘intruder’, and as nurses we pride ourselves in having certain insights into how diabetes can change peoples’ lives demonstrably. There is, for example, the shock of diagnosis for some, or the denial of the condition for others. There is the struggle to accept change in behaviours and the stigma attached to feeling different, or injecting. All have been reported in this journal. So far so good – but let’s now return to the novel.

In the book we have what seems like a normal family of four. In fact they are all rather dysfunctional. The mother bears the scars of losing her own mother at a young age and the resulting feelings of abandonment prevents her from showing love to her own children. Her 12 year old daughter feels uncared for and is bullied at school. Her teenage brother is troubled by an internet prank which goes disastrously wrong and tries to commit suicide. The step father is a serial womaniser because he has failed to find genuine love and caring. Any one of these individuals could be diagnosed with diabetes and find themselves in our clinics. We may be empathetic towards these new patients with regards to the impact of diabetes and the shock of diagnosis – this is all correct – but we may be unaware of the family dynamics and what went before. In short, diabetes can cause broken lives, but we must be aware that some patients’ lives were broken long before they come to us.

It is good to keep these thoughts when we read the papers in this edition. There are insights from a variety of authors from exploring the success of self-manage-

ment interventions, to perceptions of change in partners with type 2 diabetes, and negative body image in people with diabetes. For health professionals there is the knowledge needed with regards to genetic testing and organising diabetes management in rural remote locations. We also report on the latest debate with regards to empowerment.

Let us return to the novel one final time. At the end of the book ‘the intruder’ goes away although the characters have changed forever. In reality diabetes never goes away, but just as the end of the story can also be described as a new beginning for the characters, so must we also facilitate new beginnings and changes in our patients. To do this successfully we will need to work towards understanding not only the impact of diabetes on patients’ lives, and how diabetes ‘intrudes’ into daily existence, but also the family dynamics which shaped those lives previously and continue to do so.

Conference highlights

We are sure readers will need little reminding that the 15th FEND Annual Conference takes place in Stockholm on 19–20 September 2010. This year will be an important meeting because, in addition to the usual packed programme and important master classes, there is an influential report from previous co-editor Sarah Hills on the DIAMAP project. Sarah will discuss progress on charting diabetes research in Europe for the next 10 years, and she has also agreed to update readers in the next edition of EDN. This research strategy will have great implications for all of us and our patients in the next decade.

We also have the inaugural address from Professor Angus Forbes, the FEND chair, who will be discussing the progression of our profession. For diabetes nurses in Europe these are challenging and exciting times, and the FEND conference programme reflects this.

Gillian Hood and Bert Vrijhoef

Co-editors, *EDN*



Letters

We would be pleased to receive any comments you may have on articles published in this issue of *European Diabetes Nursing* or any practice points or ideas you would like to share with readers. We will consider publishing any correspondence in future issues.

Please send your comments to: The Editor, *European Diabetes Nursing*, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 8SQ, UK.