

Background to the Creation of the Memory Calendar

Val, my late wife, had Alzheimer's for the last 7 years of her life, but retained an insight into what was happening to her.

After 3 years she said that she was having difficulties identifying day and date from the wall calendar with 30/31 squares. We looked for any calendar to solve this problem, but there were only the small black calendars, with day/date to be torn off for each new day. She identified that she really wanted one which would allow her to know why that day was important to her.

When we were shopping in the local supermarket, Val came back to me with a small (A7) spiral-bound notepad, and said that I could make a calendar. Therefore on each page I put the day/date leaving 3/4 lines to enter anniversaries, birthdays, medical appointments, Memory Cafés and social engagements, etc. The spiral bound notepad stood next to Val's usual chair, and she saw one day at a time, and she no longer needed to ask: 'Is it today that.....?' Each notepad lasted 2 months, and it helped Val.

Val then suggested that we should take it down to the Memory Café to see what the Dementia Support Workers thought of it because she said: 'If it helps me, it may help other people with similar problems.' The DSWs knew of others in the same situation, and suggested that it should be produced commercially.

Following this suggestion, I contacted Chris Andrews, the publisher of the wall calendar, and he asked for a sample, and he came up with the (A5) Memory Calendar which covers a whole year, by covering 6 months in one direction and 6 months in the other. Using a local grant, a number of 2014 Calendars were purchased, and distributed on a trial basis to the Alzheimer's Memory Cafés in Derbyshire. At the end of the year there were many phone calls asking where the 2015 Calendar could be obtained. Unfortunately there was no fund available, so no Calendar for 2015 was produced.

Chris Andrews, aware of the response, decided to gamble on producing one for 2016, and the Alzheimer's Society on-line shop added a number to their 'aids for sale' list.

The Memory Calendar continues to be available on-line or directly from Chris Andrews (01865-723404) at £10 plus p & p. The greater part of the production costs are now covered by sponsorship, so all profits are shared between two charities.

Keith Horncastle