

Trevor's Story

My name is Trevor. I'm 62 years of age, and I care for my wife, Carol, who's 54. She was diagnosed three years ago with metastatic cancer. The nature of her cancer is that there is no cure for it, there is no operation to cure it, and that it's more a question of managing the disease.

The care that you get whilst you're undergoing treatment is fantastic. On the first occasion whenever the oncologist said, "That's it, that's your treatment over", that's when the problems arise for you because you walk out of the hospital and you go, "What happens next?" and, as a lot of people would say, you would imagine it's elation, it's over, it's finished, but it's not, and it's places like Charis Cancer Care come in because they become your crutch.

No one tells you, as a carer, about the brown envelopes that are going to start arriving through the door – and, no, they don't have pay-packets in it. These are the letters from assorted Government Departments. It's a minefield, but there is help out there. There are places like Charis, Macmillan, but you'll find them yourself and you will get through it.

Another thing that they don't tell you about is the medication side of things. Everything is explained in great detail to you by the oncologist and by the staff in the treatment unit, about the effects of the tablets that your partner is going to be getting for their treatment, but then when the person who's in treatment goes to their own GP, they're treated for the symptoms that they're displaying to the GP, but sometimes you just sit and you look at it and you suddenly realise, well, hold on, it says not to take these tablets with these tablets. So, very...what I would recommend is: get to know your local pharmacist really well because they will help you out.

The treatment day... You have to devise ways of coping with the period waiting for your treatment to happen, so the way we dealt with it was they became shopping days, my favourite pastime, and basically, you were told, "Right, come back for your treatment at four o'clock", and this was at 11 o'clock in the morning, so we would make a decision, where are we going to, and I sat like a good boy, having a cup of coffee, while my wife went shopping.

In my previous occupation, counselling was occasionally offered, but it was...if you decided you were the one that wanted counselling, you would be scoffed at. Coming here to Charis, I discovered that it's not the case. It gives you a perspective on things that you're struggling with.

I'd heard about reflexology, and I have to be honest with you now, I'm a convert. If somebody wants my feet to do reflexology, they can have my feet, because it's the easiest way of relaxing and I know for a fact that, within five minutes here, I'm generally snoring, but I'm told that that's actually a great compliment to the therapist.

We discovered very rapidly that people who have been close friends – and I'll use this term advisedly – struggle with the diagnosis, and people will start to take a step back. The way we'd deal with it is this: if Carol is feeling well, we'll go somewhere and we'll post it on Facebook that this is where we are and there'll be photographs of her and she'll be smiling and she'll have a glass of wine. We've discovered that that's the way of letting the people who are afraid or embarrassed, or whatever way you want to put it, of making contact with you.