



PRESS RELEASE

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New Dementia Day Centre Opens Doors to Patients

The Bella Vista Dementia Day Centre will be officially opening its doors to provide services to patients as from today, Monday 16th January 2017. The exciting new development has seen GHA professionals and the private sector working in tandem to bring the project to fruition. The new facility, the first of its kind on the Rock, will offer 90 places at any one time. It will be managed by a private company, *Meddoc*, on behalf of the Gibraltar Health Authority.

Bella Vista is located at the site of the former Royal Naval Hospital and will be providing a community-orientated model of care with the aim of enhancing the life of dementia patients and their families. The Day Centre is set to become the central hub for all Alzheimer's and Dementia services that will be provided to patients.

This represents the most significant investment in the provision of elderly care services in Gibraltar for several decades. Bella Vista is a pivotal part of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar's National Dementia Vision and Strategy, which aims to secure a pathway for dementia patients from early diagnosis to the final stages, and ensures that every patient receives the appropriate service at the right time. It will also form the focus for a range of services, including a memory clinic (operational since last October), diabetes care, chiropody and other Primary Care Services. Other facilities available according to patient requirements will be cognitive behaviour therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, recreational therapy, psychiatric treatment, nutritional planning and incontinence management.

The Day Centre has been designed to cater for mild to moderate patients presenting with the condition. The strategy includes helping families to take care of their relatives in their homes and offering respite services and support to families who can no longer cope on a day to day basis.

The Day Centre will seek to extend the ability of dementia patients to remain in their own homes, so they can have meaningful social contact with their relatives, by establishing a basis for communication that can assist in the relationship between a person who presents with dementia and their family. There are help programmes designed to work on a dementia patient's memory and their ability to preserve long term memory as best as possible. Through the application of a series of coping mechanisms and skills that will be developed in a structured and coordinated basis in conjunction with families, it will be possible to create a pathway to communicate, so that they can stay at home with quality of life. This support, which will now be provided, is essential in ensuring this objective.



Dementia experts have observed that there comes a stage in the progression of the disease when families can feel burnt out because it can be a frightening experience that is difficult to understand, especially when this type of support is not available.

One of the recurring issues faced by the GHA, has been that in cases as described above, whenever a secondary condition affects a person with dementia, for instance, a fall or a chest infection, which requires hospitalization, this can lead to circumstances where the person is left in the hospital. This is something the GHA will seek to avoid with the new services provided. The new approach will see the Day Centre staff working with patients early in the onset of their condition, to ensure that the person with dementia can resolve their personal affairs, wishes and long term desires in a satisfactory manner and also learn new skills and routines to enhance their memory function. The Day Centre is also keen to transmit the idea that the institution is not the end of the game, as there is still quality of life that can be achieved for patients with dementia and their relatives.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, said: "The Bella Vista Day Centre represents a milestone in the care services provided by the Gibraltar Government to our community. Our aim is to ensure that a patient diagnosed with dementia engages with the Centre as quickly as possible, while their minds are still in reasonably good shape. This is vital, because the anchor upon which we base all our subsequent interventions will come from their life experiences, their hobbies and activities. By means of memory albums this can be beneficial to them, as it can help preserve memory function and develop social contact.

We are delighted to be able to inaugurate this excellent facility that will provide a professional, medical service that was unavailable to date. We are confident that the community will share our enthusiasm at seeing the introduction of a vital care facility to satisfy the needs of a vulnerable sector in society such as the elderly."

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC, said: "In taking this pioneering step for care in our community it was essential that we get everything right. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Ministers John Cortes, Neil Costa and Samantha Sacramento and, of course, all the GHA professionals and *Meddoc* professionals for their diligence and dedication which has enabled us to make this huge leap forward in provision of dementia care. The consequences will be felt across the community.

"Gibraltar is a community that cares; I strongly believe in our extended family setup. Now, almost a third of all those who are diagnosed with dementia in Gibraltar will be able to make use of the Bella Vista Day Centre. This will both enable families to stay together for longer and will also take pressure off other areas of the GHA, in particular St Bernard's Hospital and the Primary Care Centre, which have been dealing with significantly increased demand for services this winter.

"I am also extremely grateful to the Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Society for the work that they have done in helping us to furnish the facility and the work that they will do from here, and the comfort that they give to the families of those that live with Alzheimer's and Dementia. Thanks also to all the other charities that have assisted us, including GBC Open Day fund and Lions Club."