

How will you train nurses to care, Arlene asks PM

By Sophie Borland and Jason Groves

DAVID Cameron was yesterday forced to admit that NHS nurses lack compassion after being confronted by former Strictly Come Dancing judge Arlene Phillips.

The 68-year-old told the Prime Minister how she had witnessed nurses walking past dementia patients 'as if they didn't exist' when visiting her mother-in-law in hospital over Christmas.

And she revealed how the 84-year-old, who does not suffer from dementia, had been kept on the same ward in Hereford Hospital as several Alzheimer's patients, many of whom were 'repeatedly calling out for nurses'.

Mrs Phillips, a supporter of the Alzheimer's Society, who has spoken movingly in the past about her father's battle with dementia, claimed 'every nurse in that ward walked up and down as if they didn't exist'.

Confronting Mr Cameron during a question and answer session at a conference in London yesterday, she asked: 'How will you train nurses to care?'

The Tory leader was then forced to admit lack of compassion in the NHS was 'the biggest problem we have'.

He added: 'Some hospitals do a fantastic job and the level of care and attention from nurses is absolutely first class, but frankly in some of our hospitals it is not good enough.'

'You are right, you cannot teach people compassion - that has to be the vocation that leads you into nursing. But I think if you look at the best hospitals and compare them with the rest there are some things they are doing, often quite simple things, that can be copied.'

Mrs Phillips's intervention came



Speaking out: Arlene Phillips yesterday

WHEN PHILLIPS MET CAMERON

Every nurse in that ward walked up and down as if they [dementia patients] didn't exist. How will you train nurses to care?

Arlene to Cameron

Frankly in some of our hospitals it is not good enough. You are right - you cannot teach people compassion

Cameron to Arlene

Daily Mail
CAMPAIGN
DIGNITY FOR THE ELDERLY

after the Prime Minister delivered a key note speech into how the Government intends to tackle the 'national crisis' in care.

He pledged to double the research budget for dementia to £66million a year by 2015 and also announced plans

for all over-75s to be screened for dementia when they are admitted to hospital.

Mr Cameron said: 'Dementia is a terrible disease. It is a scandal we haven't kept pace with it. The level of diagnosis, understanding and awareness of dementia is shockingly low. It is as though we've been in collective denial.'

'We need an all-out fight-back against this disease; one that cuts across society. We did it with cancer in the 70s, with HIV in the 80s and 90s. We fought the stigma, stepped up to the challenge and made massive in-roads into fighting these killers.'

'Now we've got to do the same with dementia. This is a personal

priority of mine, and it's got an ambition to match. Nothing less than for Britain to be a world leader in dementia research and care.'

Mrs Phillips has previously spoken of her guilt at not being able to do enough for her late father Abraham who succumbed to Alzheimer's disease.

In the 12 years leading up to his death in 2000, she revealed how she juggled caring for him, bringing up her two children and trying to keep her career going.

She has said: 'I look back now and feel guilty that I didn't do more. I think I could have tried to have a room for him in my house, or arranged nursing for him.'

Mrs Phillips's comments came

as figures from the Alzheimer's Society revealed there are 800,000 dementia sufferers in the UK.

Its report found that two-thirds of sufferers admitted being lonely, with half saying they had lost friends since their diagnosis.

One admitted he had been admonished by a barman at his local pub for repeating himself.

A poll of 300 dementia patients carried out by the charity also found nearly half felt they were a burden to their family while another four in five felt depressed.

Previously the charity had estimated there were 750,000 dementia sufferers in Britain, with around 60 per cent undiagnosed.

Locked up and sedated, fate of dementia patients

By Sophie Borland Health Reporter

DEMENTIA patients are increasingly being 'restrained' by hospital staff and carers, a report warns.

The number of approvals for staff to use the controversial measures - which include locking sufferers in their rooms or putting them in beds with high railings to restrict their movement - has soared by more than 50 per cent in the past 12 months.

The report, by health watchdog Care Quality Commission, reveals that 4,951 'restraining orders' were granted to hospitals and care homes last year, up from 3,297 in 2009/10.

The orders include locking patients in rooms, fixing seat belt-like devices to chairs or using powerful sedative drugs to prevent them from wandering off and hurting themselves.

Because the measures technically breach patients' human rights, staff are required by law to get permission from their local authority or NHS trust before taking action.

But the CQC warned many patients were being restrained illegally because hospital and care home staff had not sought approval beforehand.

Its inspectors found one distressed woman at a care home in the West Midlands who had been put in a bed with

THE RESTRAINTS THAT BREACH BASIC RIGHTS

EXAMPLES of restraints in the CQC report included:

- Locking patients in rooms overnight to stop them wandering off;
- Strapping them into chairs with 'lap belts', which are similar to seat belts;
- 'Locking' them in beds with high rails so they cannot fall out - but also cannot get things on bedside tables;
- Giving them powerful sedatives if they are agitated or aggressive;
- Leaving sticks or wheelchairs out of reach so patients are unable to move about freely.

railings so high she could not reach objects from her bedside table.

Staff had not bothered to apply for a restraining order beforehand.

In another care home, staff routinely locked patients in rooms without seeking approval from the local authority.

Doors could also only be opened by a special number code which patients had not been told - and would be unable to remember even if they had.

Inspectors also found that many staff had not been properly trained to apply

for these orders, called Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, and did not know when they needed to apply for permission.

Although restraining orders are mainly taken out on dementia sufferers, they are also sometimes used on adults with mental health problems and learning difficulties.

Last year 52 per cent of applications were for dementia sufferers and 69 per cent were for patients over 65.

Cynthia Bower, chief executive of the CQC, said yesterday: 'The safeguards are vital to ensure that a person's best interests are carefully considered, their needs fully understood, their wishes taken into account and their human rights properly respected.'

'The safeguards are no longer new, and care homes and hospitals have had time to train their staff and develop their internal procedures.'

'We expect them to embed this as a routine, but essential, element of their operation.'

Hospital staff must apply to the primary care trust for such orders while care homes must seek authorisation from the local council.

It can take less than 24 hours for approval to be granted. Staff can email a brief description of the patient's circumstances and why they think they need to be restrained. The application is then considered by a team of officials.

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