

PRESS RELEASE from The Relatives & Residents Association

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'Oral health and the maintenance of continence are the cornerstones of dignity in health care,' say healthcare experts at R&RA conference on health and wellbeing in care homes

'Oral health is the key to wellbeing for people living in care homes,' says Professor Jimmy Steele, Chair of the recent Independent Dentistry Review undertaken for the Secretary of State for Health. He was speaking at a London conference organised by national care home charity, the Relatives & Residents Association, on Tuesday 7 July 2009.

Professor Steele was launching the latest R&RA publication, *Keep Smiling: Dental care and oral health for older people in care homes*. He praised the charity for visiting a topic that is so often neglected and yet so fundamental to individual wellbeing.

Dr Adrian Wagg, consultant geriatrician at University College Hospital London, addressed the second conference topic on the management of continence. He asked, 'What better indicator of private and dignified care than that involved in toileting and continence care?' If care is mismanaged, it leads to incontinence and results in social isolation, lack of self-esteem, self-consciousness, loss of control and embarrassment.

And yet, as all speakers stressed, there are well-attested ways of delivering care that respects the individual, maintains their dignity and fosters their sense of wellbeing. Many examples of better ways of doing things were discussed and described.

The conference was organised as part of the R&RA's health and wellbeing campaign to consider the links between health and dignity. Delegates heard a range of speakers, including care home managers, dentists, doctors and specialist nurses. A wide mix of delegates attended – and enjoyed the proceedings. One participant commented:

'Thank you so much for involving me in your wonderful conference. You are always so good at knowing just what matters to residents and relatives and the presentations were excellent.'

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. The R&RA is the national charity that supports older people in care and their relatives, and campaigns for improved standards and better quality of life for all care home residents.

2. *Keep Smiling: Dental care and oral health for older people in care homes* is published by the R&RA, price £8.00.
3. For further information, contact Gillian Dalley, Alison Clarke or Colin Hutchens on 020 7359 8148.

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