

MS Society Foyle Branch Support Officer's Report to AGM 16th May 2006

Thursday Support Group

Our support group continues to meet on a monthly basis at FDRC. These meetings are still proving very popular and our programme varies from having guest speakers and presentations, to lively discussions among ourselves.

We have had some very interesting speakers throughout the year; examples of these being, June McCarter, speech therapist, Deirdre Pena – Dietician, Willie Coyle who is involved in domiciliary care. At our last meeting earlier this month, Brendan Quinn – Pharmacist from Galway talked at some length about LDN – Low Dose Naltrexone. This drug is being used widely at the moment by people affected by MS. We had a huge attendance that night, 53 in total, some from Donegal, Coleraine and Strabane. Although the drug is not licensed for MS, it is hoped that in the future trials could begin.

Tuesday Club

From June until September of last year our Tuesday Club members had fortnightly outings on our coach to various resorts around the North West and Donegal. Taking the ferry from Rathmullan to Buncrana, I'm told was the highlight of these trips, why wouldn't it be when you end up in the Inishowen Gateway hotel for afternoon tea. On all the other outings picnics were organised by our volunteers. From October last until now the Tuesday Club resumed their weekly meetings at FDRC where activities include quizzes, bingo and of course plenty of chat and banter. The afternoon is rounded off with tea, sandwiches and home baking provided by our volunteers.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteer drivers and helpers who help make both the Thursday Support Group and the Tuesday Club a great success.

Yoga

Yoga classes continue weekly at FDRC every Tuesday afternoon. Madeline Callaghan facilitated the class until October of last year when she had to take a break to pursue her studies. Marian Simpson is our current facilitator for yoga and fortunately for us she is as dedicated and committed to our group as was Madeline. This Tuesday session continues to draw a large number of our members – some days as many as 15. The Branch recognised the need for yoga classes in the Claudy area. In the last few months we have been able to get yoga up and running very successfully in the Diamond Centre in Claudy. Both classes find these gentle exercises very beneficial for our MS as well as enhancing our general health and well-being.

Tai Chi – Qi Gong

Tai Chi – Qi Gong continues fortnightly at FDRC, every other Thursday. This activity involves gentle exercise and breathing techniques, which can increase our energy levels and like yoga it can improve our general health and well-being. Thanks to Danny Butterfield, Tai Chi instructor who facilitates this activity.

Physiotherapy Exercise Sessions

Physiotherapy Exercise Sessions continued fortnightly at FDRC up until the end of January of this year, when Lynn Browne – Physio Technician left. Unfortunately we have been unable to get a replacement to date but fortunately the 'Caring for Me' programme which Terry has already mentioned, has been able to fill that slot. Hopefully in the very near future we will be able to get our exercise sessions up and running again.

Research

Several of our members, including myself, took part in research conducted by researchers from the University of Ulster, Jordanstown. The purpose of the study is to determine the effectiveness of reflexology in treating the symptoms associated with MS. The treatment lasted for 10 weeks with a series of follow up questions. At the end of the investigation, those who were involved will be informed about the outcome of the study. Watch this space.

Support

During the past year a number of our members have applied to the support committee for grants towards intercom systems and holidays. These grant requests were jointly funded on a fifty- fifty basis between FH&SST and ourselves. The MS Society Foyle Branch has a good working relationship with FH&SST and I hope this to continue in the future.

Membership of our branch continues to grow and over the past year we have welcomed new members to the Support Group, Tuesday Club, Yoga and Tai Chi. We keep in regular contact with our members when they are unwell.

Finally, one of our members, Maggie Falconer, came up with the idea of starting up a book club. In a short space of time, we had gathered up quite a variety of books and it not only provides a source for reading but has also initiated a small income for our branch at books costing £1 each.

Moira Leitch
Support Officer
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