

Our patients are inspiring...

**“Don’t be afraid of
the word ‘hospice’.”**

We are privileged to care for people like Ros and her family, at probably the most difficult time in their lives, but we can only do this with the generosity of our local community.

We have to raise over £20,000 every day in order to provide care, free of charge, to our patients and their relatives.

For further information about how to support Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice Care, contact our Fundraising team on:

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support@pth.org.uk

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Ros's Story
Support for those living with MS

Phyllis Tuckwell[®]
Hospice Care 
...because every day is precious

Ros's Story



Although now retired, Ros (58), has a degree in Theology and keeps herself busy by mentoring Theology students. In her spare time she is writing a book about journeys, both actual and spiritual, and is passionate about history and archaeology.

In 1997 Ros, who has always been keen on sport and outdoor pursuits, was out running in Germany, where she lived at the time. She stumbled and fell over a rock, landing on her back and sustaining an injury to her vertebrae and spinal cord. Ros was immediately admitted to a spinal unit in Germany where she underwent a major operation on her lower back.

"During my rehabilitation, I worked up to being able to use a lightweight manual wheelchair, as my arms were fine," she says. "I also used elbow-crutches to walk a bit. Six months after my accident I returned to England, where I continued my rehabilitation at Frimley Park Hospital and Atkinson Morley Hospital. Things were starting to look up."

However, one Sunday as she was preparing lunch, the left side of her face, her left arm and her left side suddenly flopped, leaving Ros virtually paralyzed.

Ros was referred to the King Edward VII hospital in Midhurst for an MRI scan to establish the cause. At first the consultant thought it could be a stroke, but results showed it was actually a severe Multiple Sclerosis (MS) attack, which left Ros unable to walk.

"The human body has muscles, bones and nerves, and the nerves are like the electrical wiring in a house," Ros explains. "Electrical wiring has metal inside it, covered by a plastic sheath and the plastic sheath protects that wire inside and makes sure the electricity runs to all the right places. If you have MS - which is an auto-immune illness - your body stops producing myelin, which is the sheath around the nerves, and starts destroying the myelin instead. In other words, the body actually attacks the protective sheath around the nerves, which means the nerves do the same as the wiring in your house would if it was eaten away by mice - it short-circuits. The electricity, which makes your body move, stops working properly, so you can't move your legs, or your bladder will not function, or your eyes don't work."

When Ros's consultant first suggested referring her to Phyllis Tuckwell, she was reluctant. *"I was very anti the idea, because I still liked to think of myself as being in rehab, and I believed I was going to get better. When I first came to a Day Hospice session I was utterly terrified, not only because I didn't know what to expect, but also because of the emotional impact of being in a palliative care setting, when I had been used to going to the spinal rehab unit, which was very different."*

However, Ros has found that the care offered by Phyllis Tuckwell has helped her to manage her symptoms and improve her quality of life.

*"When you come to the Hospice, **you start to build a network of relationships** and you find it easier to speak to some people more than others. But **the teams work so closely together here** that you don't feel you have to repeat yourself all the time. It's an integrated process, and for me getting to know*



Jane in the chaplaincy team has been very important."

As well as the chaplaincy services which Phyllis Tuckwell

provides, Ros also enjoys the massages and complementary therapies which she receives on her visits to the Hospice.

"The Hospice is the only place that I feel comfortable expressing fear for the future, frustration with the pain, or anxiety about my disability" she says. *"At the risk of sounding melodramatic, if I had not been referred to Phyllis Tuckwell I could have committed suicide by now. I had reached a point where the pain and isolation was getting too much, but **here I receive a joined-up holistic service.**"*

*"Don't be afraid of the word 'Hospice'", she continues. "The medieval meaning of the word is 'shelter' - and **it should be seen as a place of shelter and nurture and hospitality**, rather than a place to die. **It is a place where you can be an individual.**"*

Ros's three children, who are 26, 28 and 30 years old, are also relieved that their mum has found such comfort and support from Phyllis Tuckwell – and so is Pip the dog, Ros's faithful friend, who also likes getting a massage as he works hard too!