

Monday

Stream E Sessions 1 and 3

## Christine Ratnapala



### Biography

I am a nurse and for the last fifteen years have been involved in health and safety and manual handling training for staff both in the private sector and social services.

In July 2005 I completed the Diploma in Back Care Management at Loughborough University returning to complete the Masters in Back Care Management in July 2007. My dissertation involved research into staff postures when assisting with feeding in care homes.

In January 2008 I joined the Back Care Team at Lincolnshire NHS Shared Services, working with the Lincolnshire Primary Care Trust and Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust. I have attended the East Midlands Back Exchange meetings for many years and am currently Secretary for the group.

## Are you Sitting comfortably? The Effects of Assisting Feeding

### Abstract

**Aim.** To disseminate the information from the study to staff who may be involved in assisting with feeding at meal times in a variety of care settings.

This presentation will discuss the findings of the research. Case studies will highlight the actual postures staff adopted while supporting residents sitting in chairs or in bed with this activity. Assessment tools will be used and proposed interventions to reduce the postural stresses faced by staff when assisting with feeding discussed.

**Background.** The National Nutritional Audit of Elderly Individuals in Long-term Care (2000) stated that nutrition has a vital role in maintaining health and improving the quality of life of residents. 'Red tray' systems have been introduced in hospitals to highlight that patients require assistance. Meals should be unhurried, encourage independent eating and give sufficient time. The staff offering assistance should do so discreetly, sensitively and individually (The National Minimum Standards, Care Homes for Older People Regulations DoH 2003).

While training staff it became clear that they preferred to be seated when feeding residents and would demonstrate how they would position their chair to ensure that they were sitting comfortably. However, anecdotal evidence from staff in the care homes highlighted that they found assisting residents could be both time consuming and awkward as they often sat in stooped and twisted postures.

**The objectives of this research** were to identify the postural effects on staff when assisting residents to eat:

1. To evaluate the current levels of awareness held by
  - Management and staff
2. To explore factors that might affect the staff
  - In the care home environment
  - The resident and the nature of the feeding assistance
  - About the individual staff
3. To identify interventions that could help to reduce the postural effects on staff.