

## Don't Overdo it

“The NHS End of Life Care Programme was set up to improve the quality of care for people at the end of life. In particular, it aims to help more people live and die in the place of their choice. It also aims to reduce the numbers of people in care homes being moved unnecessarily to hospital in the last weeks of their life.” (emphasis ours).

The National Council for Palliative Care is co-sponsor of this programme, announced in late July 2006, and no doubt it will help to improve the way dying people are treated in care homes. But already doctors resist pressure from relatives to refer elderly residents to hospital; families are told “she is too ill to be moved”, or “you wouldn’t want him to die in the ambulance, would you?” This can lead to a slow and unnecessary death, while families despair.

At the Maypole Nursing Home in Birmingham, now closed down, “bronchial pneumonia” was given as the primary cause of death in 80% of the deaths, BBC News reported on 21st August 2006. “A GMC hearing ruled there was no evidence to support this in the cases they examined...” Now the solicitor representing some of the families of residents who died is seeking a judicial review of the refusal of the Coroner, Mr Aidan Cotter, to hold inquests.