

*Recommendations from the
International Meeting
"Care for our Elderly Members"*

The Age of Wisdom



Aix-en-Provence 19-23 March 2012

**Front cover: Communal painting from
Aix-en-Provence Meeting, 2012**



CRITERIA to USE when a SISTER MOVES to a CARE HOME

It is good if a sister is able to express her desire for this care. This she would do in dialogue with her community, and the team or sister responsible for the care and welfare of sisters. If the sister is not able to make this decision then her community and those responsible for the care and welfare of sisters, would make the decision. As far as is appropriate each sister should be aware of her situation and decisions related to her care.

The criteria are the physical and mental condition of the sister.

RESPONSIBILITY for THOSE in AGED CARE

With our own diminishing numbers it is more and more difficult to find sisters to be in charge of our own care communities or of sisters in other care facilities. It is important to have pastoral care and leadership for sisters in care to ensure that they receive the appropriate animation and accompaniment described above. In some situations we must now look to engaging trained lay personnel to provide this pastoral care and leadership in our own care homes and or for sisters who are in other care homes.

INTRODUCTION

The meeting held in Aix en Provence in March 2012 on the theme of “Care for our Elderly Members” proposed a number of recommendations that we are now happy to share with the whole congregation. These recommendations came out of the desire of the gathering to ensure that each of our sisters has quality care and the possibility of a full and meaningful life until her death.

We ask each group of communities to study these recommendations in communities and assemblies and to implement those that are applicable to their particular reality.

RESOURCES FOR AGED CARE

Houses for aged care. Where we have communities or houses in which we care for our elderly and sick members it is necessary to make a study to determine the suitability of the house for adequate care of the sisters. What equipment or facilities need to be improved for the care of our very sick and aged? It may be necessary to close some of these houses. These decisions should be carried out in the context of a study of all of our properties. Before deciding to make a sizeable investment in the adaptations and renovation of a house for care of the aged we need to ensure we will require this facility for a period of at least 5 to 10 years. Having our own houses for the care of our sisters may become less and less realistic as our numbers are diminishing. What is important is that we make sure that the sisters are in the best place for the care they require. What are the possibilities for placing sisters in other care facilities?

Sharing of resources. We need to think congregationally in relation to our resources, this includes use of resources in the care of our aged sisters.

A suggestion was made to establish a congregational fund for the care of our aged sisters. This proposal will be taken up by the CLT and the IFT.

ANIMATION of OLDER SISTERS in CARE

The animation of our sisters whether in our own homes or elsewhere is an important aspect of care of the aged. This animation should include physical, mental, recreational, cultural and spiritual aspects. Where we have our own houses we need to ensure that there is adequate physical space for this animation.

Provision of this aspect of care requires planning, employment of appropriate resource persons and budgeting. Efforts should be made to benefit from resources beyond our communities provided by local authorities.

Ideas for animation – Celebrations for different occasions, encouraging use of technology e.g. computers, large screen TV's, creative activities, music, hobbies, outings, massage, pets and animal therapy, encourage people to come into the community homes e.g. school groups, drama groups etc.

ACOMPANIMENT of SISTERS in the LAST STAGE of LIFE

The following are guidelines to follow:

Be available especially to listen. Keep hope and respect the independence of the sister. Give sisters activities that are suitable for their condition and situation. Know in advance what a sister likes, wants or does not like. Carers to know something of the life of the sister, her background and family.

This is important so that when she can no longer communicate verbally she is able to be spoken to her of her story, as well to accompany her with the music, readings, hymns, prayers, etc. that she likes.

When a sister is near death it is important to take the time to accompany her in her final journey. Physical touch, praying and speaking with the sister are important ways of being with, at this time.

Care personnel whether sisters or lay should receive training in palliative care.

SISTERS' PERSONAL CARE PLANS

Each sister as she approaches her third age needs to think of preparing herself for this stage of our life. In our gatherings, assemblies and communities we need to facilitate conversations about care, to share on this reality, our discoveries as we grow older, our fears, anxieties, personal concerns etc.

Each one should prepare her own care plan. This could include:

The desire to be informed about our own medical situation; that no extraordinary means be taken to prolong life artificially; what one wants for her funeral.

A list of how one wants to be treated and respected (likes and dislikes) when one is no longer able to express oneself can also be included. As well as how to be kept informed of the life of the congregation if no longer in our own care home.

It is important that we all have knowledge and information on different medical conditions of aging. We need to access resource people for these topics to be addressed in assemblies or community meetings.