

## Press Release from Carbon Monoxide Awareness the charity

Monday 16th November 2015 marks the start of the 10th Carbon Monoxide Awareness week. The Charity thought it fitting that after ten years it should take a look and see what achievements had been made which improved the facilities available to those people unfortunate enough to be exposed to carbon monoxide.

In 2005 the charity was set up because of the total lack of information and support available to people suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. The principle aims of the charity were to educate all sectors of society and to that end funding was sought from various bodies to finance the collection and dissemination of information. One of the results of this work was the highlighting of an abysmal lack of knowledge on the part of those persons charged with the health and wellbeing of society at large as well as the total absence of any cohesive recording programme identifying the number of persons affected by this condition. In an attempt to address the findings representation was made to the Department of Health on the basis that the figures quoted for those affected was, in the opinion of the charity woefully inaccurate and this finally resulted in the department revising the figures of those affected and estimating a cost to the Health Service based on this revision of over £170 million per year.

In 2009 formal funding, principally from the Department of Health ceased and the charity was forced to severely curtail the work it was doing. At the same time that this occurred the All Party Parliamentary Gas Safety Group changed its name to the All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group which despite the change of name proved to be nothing more than yet another talking shop as far as providing support and information for victims was concerned. This was followed by the creation of the All Fuels Forum which openly admitted via the Chair that no provision was included in either the business or action plans for any improvement in the support or provision of treatment or research into the effects of exposure.

By now research from the United States had highlighted further problems with the combination of the gas with tissue protein leading to death of tissue some eight months to two years after the exposure. This provided the charity with the answer to why victims who had apparently survived an exposure suddenly started to deteriorate some considerable time after the exposure.

To re-enforce the new findings the charity, now down to a one day event in the House of Lords instead of the week-long event which included visits to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland organised a presentation highlighting the myriad of symptoms generated by exposure and tried to remove the emphasis on gas being, as thought by a large majority of the public, the principle culprit for carbon monoxide poisoning cases. All to no avail, there was still no sign of any improvement in the provision of facilities for victims but there was a significant increase in the number of mutual admiration stories appearing in the press about the achievements of the All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group and the various bodies who claimed to have made great improvements to the situation.

Then in 2012 the Institute of Gas Engineers and Managers joined the fray, not to improve things for victims but to provide yet another talking shop which, as with the All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group and The All Fuels Forum has failed to provide any improvement in support for the victims. The charity was fortunate enough to gain an ally within Gas Safe Register and funds were made available from the Gas Safe Charity to upgrade the website and improve the on line service provided by the charity for victims. Otherwise the charity has survived on personal donations and continues to offer support and information to victims.

The visions of various groups formed within sectors of society discussing and formulating strategies to minimise the problems caused by carbon monoxide, of a treatment centre staffed by knowledgeable and experienced staff and of the instigation of research into how many Alzheimer diagnoses could in part be attributable to carbon monoxide or the establishment of the real benefits of atmospheric and hyperbaric oxygen as a treatment are all still a pipe dream.

In looking at this lamentable state of affairs there only appears to be one reason that no action has been taken to improve the lot of carbon monoxide poisoning victims and that must be the lack of motivation to put some money on the table.

More and more the charity is coming to realise that as with war, as far as politicians and the National Health Service are concerned, the £174 million spent each year on carbon monoxide poisoning cases is an acceptable alternative to trying to find the funding to provide proper facilities to investigate and treat this terrible condition. Because there is still no co-ordinated collection and analysis of the numbers of people affected by carbon monoxide poisoning this cost is the same as everything else in this field, just a stab in the dark. It seems to be fine for the politicians and industry bosses just to talk about these things, but it leaves victims in the same position they were in ten years ago when Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week was first instigated.

Where is that I hear you ask? Well there has been no apparent improvement in the availability of specific support and information for victims and there is still no central provision to which victims can be sent for treatment and/or evaluation. Finally and probably of most concern is that changes in the law and the escalating cost of retaining expert and knowledgeable assistance looks like making more difficult, if not impossible, to apportion responsibility for the causing of incidents or to gain financial recompense to help victims cope with the problems caused by the exposure to this deadly gas

Anthony Brunton. IEng. MIPlantE. MSOE. LCGI. FCIPHE. RP.  
Master Plumber.

Technical Adviser and Chair of the Board of Trustees