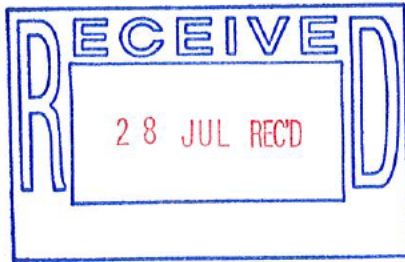


27/7/2015,



Dear Lillian, Some people were
enthusiastic, because they are afraid of
going into a nursing home, which they
think is depressing. However, this does
not have to be the case.
See the attached.

Yours faithfully

Bernadette A. Quinn

Can life in a nursing home be made uplifting and purposeful?

Changing Aging with Dr Bill Thomas

Dr. Bill Thomas is an international expert on elderhood and geriatric medicine. He is the founder of the Eden Alternative and Green House Project, a writer and musician.

From *Being Mortal: Medicine and what matters in the end* by Atul Gavande, published by Profile books and Henry Holt (US)

This book is about an experiment performed by Dr Bill Thomas, when he became Medical Director of Chase Memorial Nursing home, which had 80 residents. About half the residents had a physical disability and four fifths had Alzheimer's disease or other forms of cognitive disability.

When he started he felt depressed at the despair in every room. He decided to try an experiment. In the book it says, it "was as mad and naïve as it was brilliant." Dr Thomas said he wanted to attack "the three plagues of nursing home existence – boredom, loneliness and helplessness. " He persuaded the staff to allow him to apply for a small grant to obtain two dogs – one for each floor, 4 cats and 100 parakeets, real plants in each room, a vegetable and flower garden. Much to the surprise of the staff, Dr Thomas won the grant. Friends and family created the vegetable and flower garden and a playground for the children.

Some of the staff objected to extra work. Gradually they accepted that the animals and plants were everyone's task. The residents came to life. "People who we had believed weren't able to speak started speaking," Thomas said. "People who had been completely withdrawn and nonambulatory started coming to the nurse's station and saying, "I'll take the dog for a walk." All the parakeets were adopted and named.

Staff members brought their children to hang out after school, The home had on-site child care for the staff and a new after-school program. Over two years, comparing it with a nearby nursing home, deaths fell by 15%. Prescriptions fell by half with their cost falling to 38%.

Dr Thomas has a theory about what living things provide – In place of boredom, they offer spontaneity. In place of loneliness, they offer companionship. In place of helplessness, they offer a chance to take care of another human being.

Life had greater meaning and pleasure.