**Chairman’s Report**

**Lawrence Home Nursing Team AGM**

**June 22nd 2021**

Thank you for attending the Annual General Meeting of the Lawrence Home Nursing Team.

Our charity is now in its twenty-second year and the one just gone has in many ways been our most challenging year to date.

The last few months have reminded me of a story by Joseph Conrad, called Gaspar Ruiz. The story is set in South America, and begins with the hero, Gaspar, facing a firing squad for his part in anti-government activities. He hears the crash of the rifles and falls to the floor with the others, only to discover to his surprise that he isn’t dead after all and is in fact unhurt. He lies as quietly as possible under the pile of bodies until all the soldiers have gone, then leaves the building unnoticed and carries on with his life.

A year ago it felt very much as if the charity was in a similarly life-threatening situation, and it is good to be able to report that, though not completely unscathed, we have survived and all things considered are in remarkably good health.

The nursing team has been magnificent and has coped brilliantly with all the challenges they have faced. You will hear more from Jenny later so there is no need for me to go into detail here about difficulties faced and challenges overcome. One thing Jenny won’t tell you is what an outstanding leader she is. Jenny brings out the best in people and inspires loyalty in all around her. These qualities were called for more than ever in the year gone by.

Increased demand for our nursing services meant added demand on the resources that go to pay for them, so it was doubly unfortunate that the lockdown restrictions forced us to cancel the programme of carefully-planned fund-raising events on which our charity relies. Verity will provide details in her verbal report later on. During that time of crisis we were most grateful for the support that came from donors old and new, including a donation from a sister charity. We were also helped by a government support scheme, which though slow to arrive was most welcome when it came.

In March and April last year, we lost over half of our investment income. We have an investment portfolio, which has been established from generous donations, bequests and fund-raising events over the life of the charity, and is used to provide income to support the work of the nurses. Our income from this source collapsed as commercial property funds we invest in lost income when their tenants ceased paying rent, and companies stopped paying dividends as their sales dried up during lockdown. Banks and insurance companies were happy to continue paying dividends but were ordered by their regulator not to do so. In the last few months our investment income has started to build back up but remains significantly below its pre-pandemic level.

2020 was also the year in which the Lawrence Home Nursing Team became a Limited Charity. We had been advised that we had grown to a size where Limited status was the right way forward. This demanding project was led by our Treasurer, Alan Mathers, ably assisted by Louise Blackler. We had hoped to become Limited at the beginning of our accounting year, April 1st, but were prevented from doing so by circumstances beyond our control and ended up having a nine-month transitional ‘year’ covering the period from April 2020 to March 2021. The current year began on April 1st as before and will be our first full year as a Limited Charity.

There is a saying that ‘what doesn’t kill us makes us stronger’. I have felt the truth of this saying very much over the past year. We are a committed, well-knit team with clear common goals, and surviving the past year has brought us closer together. We all look forward to the time when we can once again meet round a table together, a welcome change from the ubiquitous Zoom.

Alison Haine steps down from her role as Director at this AGM. On behalf of the Board I would like to thank her for her outstanding contribution over the last seven years, first as a Trustee than as Director. Everyone is delighted that Alison has decided to remain as a member of the Clinical Group, as well as keeping an involvement on the fund-raising side.

In the last year we have welcomed three new Directors, Cathy Elliott, Vivian Woodell and Jo Cowley. All three are well-known local figures who bring a wealth of talent and expertise to the Board. Our Governance Director, John Pritchard, devised an induction course, something we didn’t have before, as an introduction to all aspects of our work, and all three of our new Directors have been through the course and found it beneficial. We are grateful to Cathy, Vivian and Jo for agreeing to join our Board, and look forward to a long and fruitful association with them all.

So, like Gaspar Ruiz, we have picked ourselves off the floor and are getting on with our lives. During the crisis we never ceased in our work of looking after terminally ill patients at home, as we have always done, and we look forward to carrying on the work in the communities we serve in the years ahead.

**Tony Yarrow**

**June 2021**