



John Kirkham and his wife Pamela, who died in March 2006

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They provided comfort and allowed her dignity

Pamela Kirkham was just one of the 900 patients who were cared for at St Raphael's Hospice. She died, as a result of lung cancer, in March 2006. Her husband, John, tells how the care she received here afforded her comfort and dignity in her final days.

St Raphael's medical director, Dr Joseph, made initial contact with us when Pamela was an in-patient at St Helier Hospital. She was reassuring, and said she would take Pamela under the umbrella of care at St Raphael's Hospice.

After Pamela was discharged, she was regularly visited at home by the hospice's community clinical nurse specialist Kate Flint, who understood the difficulties faced by Pamela.

When pain control proved challenging, Dr Joseph offered monthly visits to her pain clinic. 'Open door access' was also given as a reassurance. Pain relief was carefully scrutinised, to avoid side-effects from the various medications. Indeed Pamela's whole situation was carefully looked at, and so staff were able to provide her with care that ensured she had the best possible quality of life.

The monthly clinic reviews, which we both

attended, looked beyond mere medical care and embraced the whole sphere of life. Dr Joseph told us, many times, that patients were still very precious, despite their cancer, and that she felt it was a privilege to help.

The holistic care provided at the hospice meant Pamela was able to travel to Brentwood to attend her two nieces' weddings, which were real landmarks to her.

Eventually, as Pamela's condition progressed, she became an in-patient at St Raphael's. The staff there cared for Pamela with compassion, friendship and empathy. They provided such comfort and allowed her such dignity that she was able to reach a peaceful end in March 2006.

The care continued after her death. The Chapel of Rest was the setting of the viewing, and the natural and serene surroundings brought much comfort and peace to the family.

The care and attention we received was better than anything we could have paid for privately. The relationship we had with staff truly felt like a family relationship and we had total and utter confidence in them. We always received friendly, personal, expert advice and help.