



*Eye contact and short, snappy delivery are key to effective television communication, says Pauline Byers*

to have gained momentum lately and it often appeared that viewers wanted more spiritual support than information about the health condition being discussed. This suggests that people with health problems rely greatly on their faith and spiritual values in coping with the doubts and anxieties that arise during periods of ill-health.

### Overcoming fears

Despite early concerns about appearing on a live show, all the participants felt it was a worthwhile experience and enjoyed taking part.

The programmes provided health information and understanding at a level and in a format that the viewing audience appreciated. They also included the type of spiritual comfort that is growing in popularity.

As a nurse involved in the production and presentation of the programmes, I found the format suited my 'can do' approach. Health promotion opportunities are all around us in every facet of life and this seemed a great opportunity for nurses to promote health to a wider audience **NS**

**Pauline Byers is a nurse, writer and television presenter**

## HEALTH ON THE BOX

Pauline Byers explains how appearing on live television is an opportunity for health promotion

My career as an entrepreneurial health visitor and health promoter recently took an unexpected turn when I was invited to host a series of 12 television programmes called *Liberty Hour*.

The aim of the project was to provide information and promote discussion on health issues, while incorporating the spiritual needs of viewers. The exercise opened up a whole new variety of career opportunities for me that I had never considered before.

The weekly programmes were aired live on Sky channel 588 during peak viewing hours and transmitted across 150 countries. As the programme presenter, I selected expert panellists to appear on the programme. I then interviewed the panellists and co-ordinated

viewers' telephoned questions and contributions during the live programmes, signposting additional sources of support.

Panellists included nurses, public health specialists, a nutritionist, patients and a pastor. Each programme was devoted to a specific issue. We explored topics such as diabetes, hypertension, depression, schizophrenia, eating disorders, stress, cancer, sickle cell anaemia and constipation.

The Europe-wide audience encompassed a wide range of ethnic origins and ages. Many viewers had Christian belief systems and often framed questions within that context. A pastor and co-presenter provided spiritual advice and incorporated this dimension into viewers' health concerns.

The idea of meeting spiritual needs in a health context seems

### Tips for television presentation

- ▶ Research your material and participants beforehand.
- ▶ Always address the camera.
- ▶ Speak slowly using short sentences.
- ▶ Pay attention to how you dress, particularly around the face and shoulders.
- ▶ Make sure you get your message across in a brief, succinct manner.
- ▶ Rehearse your verbal and body language in front of a mirror.