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Emotional Parkinson demands care and dignity for elderly

□ Sir Michael Parkinson has called on society to end its "neglect" of the elderly, which he described as a "shove them in a corner and wait for them to die" attitude.

In an emotional and highly personal speech to the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), the former talk show presenter spoke movingly of his mother, Freda Rose, who had suffered with dementia before she died at the age of 96.

Mr Parkinson, 74, who is now the Government's "dignity tsar", said it was up to all parts of society, not just the NHS, to ensure that older people were

treated with the care and dignity they deserved. He added: "We should ask why are we so very terrified of getting old?"

"Why do we neglect older people as a society and shove them in a corner and wait for them to die?"

He criticised the obsession with young celebrities, asking: "What's wrong with a wrinkle?"

Speaking to the RCN's annual conference in Harrogate, he described how he had visited some nursing homes which were "just waiting rooms for death" although others were more "optimistic".