Be a champion for dignity, says Carter

Dr Peter Carter, the Chief Executive & General Secretary, called for every member to be a champion of patient dignity in his speech yesterday at Congress. His call for action came as a survey released by the RCN at the weekend revealed eight out of ten nurses leave work upset and distressed because they have not been able to deliver dignified care to patients.

In his speech to Congress delegates, Dr Carter said: 'We know there are isolated examples when nursing care falls below the high standards... that's why the RCN must always stand ready to talk about this. We have to be a guardian of high standards and a watchdog for patient dignity.'

Nurses must take responsibility for the isolated problems that exist within the profession, he added, but staff shortages, scarce resources, high bed occupancy rates and the negative impact of mixed-sex wards are the principal reasons why patient care is suffering in some places.

New research released by the RCN on Monday shows nurses are spending more than one million hours every week on non-essential clerical work, such as filling, photocopying and ordering supplies. Nurses, he said, are 'drowning in a sea' of paperwork.

'There is something especially low and disgraceful about attacking hard working nurses and other health workers who are delivering care or saving lives,' he said.

Dr Carter's speech, which lasted 31 minutes, and his comments about the need for more dignity in care were warmly received by Congress delegates. He received a standing ovation as he stepped down from the podium.

After his speech, Soline Jerram from Berkshire said: 'I was pleased that dignity was included as an issue in Peter's speech and by the message that hospitals and other organisations as a whole need to take responsibility for this issue. It's not something that nurses can address on their own.'

And Gillian Amour from the Association of Nursing Students, said: 'Students were glad to hear Dr Carter mention their issues in his speech. Bursaries are a big concern for us and it was good to hear that he's going to support us on this.'

Pay proposals highest in public sector, members hear

The full details behind the Government's proposed three-year NHS pay rise were presented at a fringe event yesterday – with the message that the 2008/09 instalment of 2.75 per cent could boost pay packets as early as June if members accept the deal.

RCN chief negotiator Josie Irwin said proposed changes to the structure of pay bands five and six could also result in a pay increase worth up to 14 per cent over the three years for thousands of nurses.

But Josie also warned that if the RCN and other unions reject the deal, it could close the door on the review of bands and signal a less generous one-year offer from the Government.

'There is no option to pick and mix with this deal,' she said. 'If the unions were to reject the three-year proposal, the Government would review the recommendation of the Pay Review Body.'

Members raised a number of issues from the floor, including the disparity between the pay of nurses and teachers and the strengths of the Government's commitment to reopen talks if inflation rises or the NHS experiences recruitment and retention difficulties.

The RCN is consulting members and recommending they accept the deal, which is the highest on offer in the current round of public sector pay negotiations. Consultation lasts until 12 noon on Wednesday 28 May. Members can respond to the consultation at www.rcn.org.uk/payproposals or through their local branch.
Pay Review Body gets strong support

The Pay Review Body (PRB) for Nursing and Other Health Professions received a ringing endorsement from Congress, with over 99 per cent (3171 members) voting to urge RCN Council to act to protect and maintain it. Only two voted against, with two abstaining.

Proposing the resolution, Shelia May of Doncaster branch said the first PRB for nurses had been established in 1983, the year she became a staff nurse. This followed years of feast or famine – with the size of the pay settlement depending on whether or not it was an election year. The PRB had resolved this problem, and while nurses had not always been pleased with its recommendations they had always accepted them. Shelia said she became concerned for the future of the PRB when the Government decided to stage the award it had recommended last year, thus devaluing its recommendation. All speakers in the debate supported the resolution.

Health care reform is going too far and too fast – that is what Congress decided when it voted to reject Resolution 2, urging more rapid change for the NHS. The resolution was defeated by 310 to 53, with 17 abstentions. And Monday afternoon’s debates closed with an interesting, wide ranging discussion on the challenge for nursing of out-of-hours community care.

Do you have a question for the Shadow Health Secretary?

The Shadow Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley, will be speaking at Congress on Thursday. If you have a question for him, email ted.powell@rcn.org.uk or drop a question into the Q&A box, which is situated in the Windsor Hall foyer, before 5pm on Wednesday.

Welcome from the South West Regional Board

On behalf of the RCN South West Regional Board and staff, I am delighted to welcome members from across the UK to Bournemouth.

As always we look forward to stimulating debate and informative events throughout the week, along with plenty of networking opportunities and, I hope, some fun! Staff and board members from the region will be based at our area just outside the main auditorium so please do come and say hello.

Today we are hosting our ‘Nurses influencing the NHS Review’ event at 12.45pm in Gladstone 2 at the Royal Bath Hotel. RCN policy adviser Tim Curry and Sir Ian Carruthers, Chief Executive of the South West Strategic Health Authority, will be sharing their knowledge and expertise, so I hope lots of you will come along to join the discussion.

I wish you all a most enjoyable week.

Alan Mawbey, Chair of Board and Council Member for the South West Region

Mary Seacole lecture tonight

Don’t miss the Mary Seacole memorial lecture, which this year will be given by Neslyn Watson Drueé MBE, FRCN, DUniv, FCGI and Chair of Kingston Primary Care NHS Trust.

Neslyn, who is also closely involved in the minority ethnic career development, will be speaking about her long career in the NHS and her transition to independent business woman. So come along and be inspired!

The Mary Seacole memorial lecture takes place at tonight at 6pm in the Mirabelle Suite of the Royal Bath Hotel.

The future of regulation

Do you believe that regulation should be brought together in one body that governs all the health care professions? Is there enough public and patient involvement in the regulation of health professionals?

These are some of the big issues that will be addressed in today’s round table discussion on the future of professional regulation. Sarah Thewlis from the Nursing and Midwifery Council, Paul Buckley from the General Medical Council, Gavin Larner from the Department of Health and David Pink from the Patient Alliance for Long Term Conditions will all be participating in the discussion. Delegates will also have the opportunity to submit questions to the panel.

RCN Council member for the North West region, Andrea Sprotopoulos who will be chairing the event says: ’I am looking forward to an informative and constructive debate on the future of professional regulation that will address some of the contentious but important issues that lie ahead of us.’

The round table discussion on regulation takes place at 4.15pm in the Auditorium and all delegates are welcome to attend.

Modernising Nursing Careers: what does it mean for you?

Professor Christine Beasley, Chief Nursing Officer for England (pictured right), updated Monday’s fringe meeting on the progress of the pre-registration nurse education and post-registration nursing frameworks consultations.

Chris reminded nurses that the public’s attitude to nurses and nursing is critical. She said the diversity of the nursing workforce should enhance nursing practice and not create divisions. Driving the consultation work is the need to:

• create a more competent and flexible workforce
• update career paths and career choices

• prepare nurses to lead in a changed system
• update the image of nursing and nursing careers.

Over the next ten years we will see 50 per cent of the UK workforce educated to degree level. Nursing is part of that global work force and we must have the skills to reflect this.

Vol pop

What does Forward together mean to you?

‘Inclusion! It’s what nursing and the RCN are all about.’ Sue Howell-Richardson, Time for Life Project Manager, Exeter

‘It is all elements of nursing working together for our profession and patients. All with one goal, the wellbeing of patients.’ Neville De Silva, mental health nurse, East London Mental Health Trust

‘Working together for the welfare of the client.’ Regina Suku-Tamba, midwife, Southampton University Hospital

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Infection prevention and control are arguably the most important clinical issues for health care workers. Post-anaesthesia care units (PACUs) are a unique environment in most hospitals and are an area of potentially high risk to patients following surgery. Later today, we will be launching guidance on infection control in PACUs, an addition to the RCN’s contribution to promoting best practice in the control of health care associated infections. The guidance contains information on standard precautions, such as basic hygiene practices, specific precautions including modes of transmission, and guidance on minimising the risks to patients and health care staff.

Come along to the Tregonwell Room of the Royal Exeter Hotel at 5.30pm and be amongst the first to see a copy.

Do you have a question about the RCN you would like answered? Is there a hot issue on current health care policy you want to find out more about? This evening, you have the opportunity to quiz the RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary, Dr Peter Carter in a special open question time. Admission is by ticket only, so come to the Enquiry Desk in the main foyer of the conference centre to collect a ticket, but hurry, supplies are limited. Question time with Dr Peter Carter takes place at 6pm in the Deauville Suite of the Trouville Hotel.

Towards an interactive web: online communities and the RCN

Online communities will form the ‘bedrock of a new age for communication’, according to RCN Web Manager, Leon Hughes. Speaking at a fringe event yesterday, Leon explained how online communities had been developed to meet the changing communications needs of members. Leon encouraged people to email him at leon.hughes@rcn.org.uk to discuss the needs of their professional networks.

RCN to launch new infection control guidelines

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Lost in transition

Children and young people experience many significant transition points between health care services. A resolution was overwhelmingly carried at Congress 2007 which called for the development of standards to ensure safe and effective transfer from children and young people’s services to adult services. A year on and Congress 2008 sees the launch of a new publication, Lost in transition – moving young people between child and adult health services, which highlights good practice and recognises that all these transitional phases can have an impact on adherence to therapeutic regimes and retention by supportive health care services.

Copies of Lost in transition are available from RCN Direct (0845 772 6100) – members £2.40, non-members £3.00. You can also download it from www.rcn.org.uk.

Put your questions to Dr Carter

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Disability Forum
On behalf of the RCN Learning Disabilities and this must stop NOW.

human rights of people with learning disabilities and this must stop NOW. Professional nurses have been ignoring the human rights of people with learning disabilities, in particular nursing, in the 21st Century. It is clear that there is much to do and this must stop NOW.

The Joint House of Commons and House of Lords Human Rights Committee reported in March 2008 that ‘…Despite marked improvements in the past thirty years in the lives of adults with learning disabilities, including the closure of long stay hospitals, there have been a number of recent failures in health care, including cases of abuse, neglect and ill-treatment.’

The following are comments made by parents of people with learning disabilities about health care, in particular nursing, in the 21st Century.

‘They say he doesn’t feel pain’ – mother of a 24 year old son with autism and a severe learning disability

‘My daughter lost two stone in five weeks in hospital. It was as if she was a non person. She had no name above her bed, no named nurse and no named doctor’ – mother of 55 year old daughter with Down’s Syndrome

It is clear that there is much to do and that nurses along with other health professionals have been ignoring the human rights of people with learning disabilities and this must stop NOW.

Jim Blair 28 April 2008
On behalf of the RCN Learning Disability Forum

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Letters

Dear Bulletin,

Nurses are ignoring human rights of people with learning disabilities

People with learning disabilities are not having their basic human rights met within health care settings. Recent inquiries have emphasised ignorance and indifference to the needs of this group and stress poor and inadequate nursing.

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Fit for Congress: today’s fitness timetable

Below is the fitness timetable for today. Don’t forget that if you take part in any five Fit for Congress activities, you will be entered into a prize draw to win £100 worth of vouchers from a sports retailer of your choice! See your RCN Exhibition Trail and Fit for Congress Prize Draws booklet for further details.

Tuesday’s activities are:
08.15-08.45
Bournemouth Beach Walk
Location: Outside Bournemouth International Centre
13.30-14.00
Self defence class
Location: Tregonwell Exhibition Hall
15.30-16.15
Training with the Territorial Army
Location: Tregonwell Exhibition Hall

Other activities taking place in the Tregonwell Exhibition Hall:
- Hula hoops
- Gym balls
- Training bikes

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E-health fringe held tomorrow

The RCN’s Information in Nursing (IN) Group is holding an event tomorrow called ‘Computer says No – are you bovvered?’ to look at the way universities and organisations are preparing students for using information technology in their future practice. The event, at which a new publication called Make IT SAFE will be launched, will start at 12:15 pm in the Cork Ballroom of the Tralee Hotel.

The IN Group is conducting a special poll to find out how much delegates know about e-Health issues. Email your answers to makeitsafe@rcn.org.uk

Q1 Have you ever used electronic patient records?  
☐ Quite a lot ☐ A little ☐ No, never

Q2 How would you rate your basic computer skills?  
☐ Very good ☐ Quite good ☐ Poor

Q3 The use of IT in health care is called e-Health. How would you rate your knowledge of e-Health overall?  
☐ Very good ☐ Quite good ☐ Poor

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Student perspective

Student’s Day arrives as Congress gets into swing, so a quick hello to the hundreds of you who have come for the day! There are seminars just for students and I urge all students to come to the student assembly inside the main auditorium over lunch. Above all have a super day!

Those who were able to attend yesterday heard Dr Carter speak of his vision for this Congress and the year ahead for nursing. The General Secretary reviewed the RCN’s achievements over the past year and looked ‘forward together’ to the year ahead. This year has seen the maturity bursary for nursing students roll out over four countries, new standards for mentors and nurse educators, and the RCN Student Road-show travel the country with an impressive 10 events. These are just some of the great achievements within nurse education this year. Today is all about moving forward. The student assembly is your opportunity to express your views on the future of nurse education and influence the work of RCN students over the next year. Hot issues include the recent press coverage of attrition within universities and support for learning within the clinical setting. Other issues include child-care, the movement toward an all degree profession and, of course, student bursaries.

I look forward to seeing everyone through the day, members of the ANS Executive and other student representatives will be available to provide guidance and support for those who need it. We are also selling pink t-shirts on the Student Information Stand. And, don’t forget to get on your ‘glad-rgs’ for dinner and dancing at tonight’s Strictly Come Nursing Student Ball.

Chris Brown
ANS Executive member for Northern Ireland and consultant editor of the answer

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The NHS at 60 - what next?

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