RCN daily bulletin
RCN Congress newsletter
Wednesday 13 May 2009

Keen on students

“People remember nurses” said Ann Keen, Under Secretary for Health, when speaking to RCN students. She told her audience about her experiences as a student nurse and said she wanted more people to work in the nursing field – emphasising that the public want nurses cared for. She said that looking after the nurse is key to looking after the patient and cited an example from the USA where patients relaxed and had better outcomes if they thought the nurses were treated well.

Ms Keen told her audience that they will see many changes in the coming years including more educated patients, as more information is now available on the internet. She said that it was no coincidence that Lord Darzi’s Next Stage Review had placed nursing at the centre of the quality and safety agenda but told the audience they needed the confidence to take this forward.

She urged students to get involved in the Prime Minister’s Commission on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery, which will review safety, champion high quality patient care and look at giving nurses and midwives more freedom to manage, commission and run their own services.

Taking a number of questions from the floor, Ms Keen admitted that it was difficult to measure compassion and described student nurse attrition as “the biggest waste of money.”

You decide on 4 June

Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Green party MEP candidates received a grilling from nursing staff across the UK at Tuesday’s European Election fringe event.

The parties fielded some of their strongest European talent to debate the RCN’s key issues including Vice-President of the European Parliament Diana Wallis (Liberal Democrat); Vice-President of the Greens/European Free Alliance, Jean Lambert (Green Party); Vice-President of the Greens/European socialist group, Linda McAvan (Labour) and Leader of the Conservatives for the European Parliament Timothy Kirkhope (Conservative).

European law has a huge impact on nursing, health care and working conditions, to create a sustainable workforce, to try to reduce staffing levels due to the EU Working Time Directive not being enforced appropriately has heightened stress – we want the EU to take work out of hospitals deal with tend to be emergencies. “She also pointed out that any fines imposed on health care organisations in the event of conviction would go back into the public purse, adding: “It’s a nonsense, really, finding a public body.”

Ms Christian was delivering the annual John Goodlad Memorial Lecture, named after a former RCN labour relations officer who died in 1991.

Manslaughter charge unlikely

The likelihood of health care organisations being convicted under new corporate manslaughter legislation was questioned last night by a leading civil rights lawyer.

Louise Christian, Head of Public Law at Christian Khan Solicitors, said there were obstacles to successful prosecutions under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act.

The act came into force last year and means companies and organisations can be found guilty of serious failures in health and safety management. But Ms Christian said: “The big question is not whether there are going to be prosecutions in the health service but are there going to be any prosecutions at all?”

Specific provisions, including a section of the act relating to “emergency circumstances”, mean convictions in health care are unlikely, Ms Christian said. “It seems to me this section is a very big hurdle because so many of the circumstances hospitals deal with tend to be emergencies.” She also pointed out that any fines imposed on health care organisations in the event of conviction would go back into the public purse, adding: “It’s a nonsense, really, finding a public body.”

Ms Christian was delivering the annual John Goodlad Memorial Lecture, named after a former RCN labour relations officer who died in 1991.
Exhibition’s final stand
It's your last chance to explore the Congress exhibition today. There's still a wealth of information, prizes and freebies to be discovered, so hit the exhibition trail today.

Question Time
The ever popular question time with RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary Dr Peter Carter is back today. Entrance is by ticket only, but a limited number are still available from the RCN enquiry desk in the level four foyer.

If you do have a ticket, Peter will be taking questions from the floor, so there is no need to submit questions in advance.

If you’ve missed out this year, don’t despair – Daily Bulletin will be publishing some of the highlights tomorrow.

Congress constitution and rules debate
The vote to change the RCN congress constitution and rules around voting members was lost yesterday. 176 members (52.54%) voted for the amendment with 159 (47.46%) voting against. There were 29 abstentions. The vote required a two thirds majority to be passed. The current Congress constitution and rules will now stay in place for Congress 2010.

Something to talk about
Today at Congress we welcome a fantastic line up of speakers and lectures. So why not take the opportunity to put up your exhibition-weary feet and learn something new.

Green light for red light
9am, Main Auditorium, HIC
The first debate of the day will be preceded by a talk by Nicki Adams from the English Collective of Prostitutes.

Keynote speaker: Sir Michael Parkinson
11.15am–11.45am, Main Auditorium, HIC
Following the success of the RCN’s own Dignity campaign, Sir Michael will speak about his own role as Dignity Ambassador for the Department of Health and how dignified patient care is still very much a number one priority for nursing staff.

Monica Baly Lecture
5.30pm–7pm, The Majestic Hotel, Billiard Room
The RCN History Society and Association of Nursing Students join together to explore the apprenticeship system for nurse training.

Mary Seacole Memorial Lecture
6.30pm–7.30pm, The Holiday Inn Hotel, Ripley Suite
This year’s lecture from the RCN Diversity and Equality Unit focuses on the rise of the Human Rights Act and its application in the health and social care setting.

Legal and governance review fringes
RCN Chair of Council, Sandra James, along with Tim Golbourn, RCN Director of Finance and Corporate services, will present information about the RCN’s review of its legal and governance structures at fringe meetings today and tomorrow.

Come along to the Reading Room in the Majestic Hotel at 1pm, Wednesday and at 12.45pm, Thursday to find out more.

Vox pops
What does counting on care mean to you?

Norma Irhuebor, nursing student, Cambridgeshire

‘Providing good quality care and our duty of care to our patients. It’s our role as a nurse to care.’

Argyll and Clyde South

‘Care that’s dependable, care that our patients can always rely on.’

Iain Macdonald

‘Having enough staff and time to do the job properly whilst being under pressure – having time to care.’

Sarah Biggs, Hertfordshire

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Neville Southgate, London

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Bobbie gets IT right

Bobbie Chadwick, Deputy President of the RCN, embarked on a quest this year – to confront her fear and tame the dreaded, scary computer monster...

Bobbie admitted at last year's AGM that she struggled with using all forms of IT, so with the help of RCN staff and lots of determination she decided to put this right.

She began with simple tasks like opening and sending emails and using email folders, then moved onto opening and storing the huge amount of documents she receives as part of her work at the RCN – making her life a whole lot easier.

The internet and the RCN website used to be a mystery to Bobbie, but not anymore as she can now access all the RCNs online services, see our news and campaign updates and download all our publications – surf-tastic!

But the most important aspect of Bobbie’s training is one that’s available free to all members – it’s the RCN Learning Zone module Do IT Now which takes you through all the basics of computing, from how to turn the thing on, how to word process, sort out expenses and much more.

Come along to the fringe event You can get IT if you really want, 2.00pm–2.45pm in Harewood Suite 2 of the Holiday Inn Hotel, to hear Bobbie talk about her progress and find out how you can get your IT skills on the right track.

Maximise your potential with the new Learning Zone

The new look RCN Learning Zone officially launches today, helping you in your personal and professional development in a way that fits around your busy life.

Come along this afternoon to the Holiday Inn to find out how this free online resource can make you stand out from the crowd with the updated ePortfolio tool. This allows you to produce professional CVs and build impressive reports to help meet your Knowledge and Skills Framework and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements.

The website also has lots of learning opportunities for you, including clinical updates, interview tips, health and safety, study skills and numeracy, which can contribute to your CPD.

Clearer navigation and a new search facility mean that the Learning Zone website is now even easier to use. As before, learning is broken down into bite-size pieces, allowing you to learn when and where you can.

More changes are planned for later in the year, including a blog and podcasts. Visit the Learning Zone today: www.rcn.org.uk/learningzone

The Learning Zone Launch

The Holiday Inn Hotel, Harewood Suite 2
2.45–3.30pm and 4–5pm, Wednesday 13 May

Pension review

All staff in the NHS Pension Scheme face an important choice in the upcoming months and RCN Employment Relations will today be offering guidance to help you make the right decision.

Eligible members of the scheme are soon to be asked whether they want to retain their existing arrangements or transfer their benefits into a scheme introduced in April for all new starters in the NHS. More details about the options can be found on the NHS Pensions website: www.nhbsa.nhs.uk/pensions

Today’s fringe event, in the Main Auditorium of the HIC at 2pm, will provide information on how this choice exercise is to be administered. Lifestyle issues that pension scheme members might want to consider when making their choice will also be discussed.

Bobbie Chadwick, Deputy President of the RCN, embarked on a quest this year – to confront her fear and tame the dreaded, scary computer monster...
On Monday the Prime Minister told Congress about his Commission, chaired by health minister and nurse Ann Keen MP, to look at the future of nursing and midwifery in England. The Commissioners, who include Peter Carter and other leading RCN members, are now asking professionals, patients and the public to tell them what they think about nursing, what needs to change, and how we can achieve the dream. The Commission website was launched this week at Congress and you can submit your views online – as an individual or as a stakeholder representative – at www.cnnm.uk. Alternatively you can do so at the Department of Health stand in the exhibition, Stand 112C, where you can pick up more information and complete a special Congress survey. The Prime Minister's Commission is a unique opportunity to influence nursing today and tomorrow. Don't miss this chance to have your say.

Jane Salvage
Commission Support Office
CNMSupportoffice@dss.gsi.gov.uk

My first experience of Congress
What a supportive collection of colleagues I have found within our organisation! The regional branch and workplace officers who encouraged me to attend Congress this year; a colleague who 'pushed me that extra mile' to introduce item two on the agenda – thanks to him for recognising that I'm always up for a challenge; the Agenda Committee for the extremely helpful practice from the lectern on Sunday afternoon – they set a light-hearted atmosphere which allayed my anxieties; and Jason Warriner who trusted me to finish promptly on the red light!

My experience has been both enjoyable and informative, networking with people from such a diverse array of backgrounds but with one common aim: improved care for both patients and staff where it counts.

Jacquie Thurlow
Health & Safety Representative, Essex Branch

Off the agenda
I was really disappointed that the Agenda Committee decided not to have any items about pandemic flu on the Congress agenda. With recent events it is clear that the threat of this is not far away. No longer are we saying if, but when the pandemic will strike. The anticipated impact of pandemic flu on both nurses and nursing will be enormous. In addition the ethical issues surrounding this need to be aired. I just hope that when we sit here next year we aren't saying I wish we had discussed that last year.

BJ Waltho
East Dorset Branch
Chair of Congress Jason Warriner responds
We all agree with you BJ that this is a very serious and important matter. However, the Agenda Committee felt that because there is so much consensus around the pandemic flu issue there would be little point in holding a debate around it at Congress. The RCN is publishing information on the website when it is helpful to do so and signposting members and others to the Health Protection Agency website.

Student perspective
Writing my column today has left me in a bit of a difficult position… According to yesterday's excellent speaker Billy Dixon, the secret to good interpersonal skills is to make other people feel important, to remove yourself from the spotlight and replace the 'me' and 'mine' with the 'you' and 'yours'. A tall order for a column that features my face, my name and my thoughts!

So, today I'm dedicating this column to thanking you – the people who made Students' Day such a success. Image consultant, Billy was just one of the speakers who made the day go with a bang. It was also a great honour to welcome Ann Keen MP, Under Secretary of State for Health, who took part in an open questions session. And if that doesn't make you feel important enough, you'll see that Ann's participation helped Students' Day make the Daily Bulletin's front page today.

Another thank you from the whole ANS Exec must go to Laura King Student Co-ordinator, Gill Robertson and Adele Bird Student Advisers for all their hard work, effort and support for making Students' Day great and also to Bron Roberts for stepping up at short notice.

The evening saw us move en masse to the Majestic Hotel for the Nursing School of Rock – check out the costumes and dance moves in tomorrow's Daily Bulletin.

Today we are continuing to debate the business of Congress and we would urge all students to get up and speak on any matter that you feel passionately about. If you don't speak, Congress will not know how you feel.

Stuart Young
Executive Committee Member for the West Midlands and Consultant Editor, The Answer

HPV vaccine for all?
Gagged – the other side of the debate

New Bulletin hits the spot
The new RCN Bulletin is coming your way next week.

Sent fortnightly to all RCN members, the Bulletin has undergone a transformation and from the 20th May will have a fantastic fresh look. It will include regular features and more space for news from around the UK, as well as listings of events local to you.

Next week's issue features a round-up of Congress news as well as items on personal development, managing your finances and the forthcoming European parliamentary elections.

You will also find plenty of job ads to help you discover new challenges and career moves.