

Unit Four

Education and professional development from a patient's perspective

Key messages

Once you have read this Unit, you should have an understanding of:

- *the need for ongoing education and development of general practice nurses (GPNs)*
- *the types of learning activities that these GPNs may undertake*
- *what a patient can expect from a GPN in training.*

Standards of education for GPNs

All registered nurses are required to re-register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) every 3 years. In order to gain re-registration, nurses are required to achieve a minimum set of standards relating to their post-basic education and practice.¹

These standards are:

- *nurses must undertake and record professional development relevant to their area of work for a minimum of 5 days every 3 years before they can re-register*
- *nurses must have worked (in some type of nursing) for at least 450 hours within a continuous 3-year period; if not, they must attend a 'return to practice' course before they can re-register to work.*

The NMC are entitled to see each nurse's personal portfolio of professional development at any time. The re-registration standards make sure that nurses keep up-to-date with education and training relating to their area of work. However, in practice, most nurses far exceed these basic requirements.

Most nurses will appreciate that the general public want to be sure of their competence, particularly when nurses are working in expanded roles, undertaking work that was previously done by the GP. Therefore, they will not object to you asking about their qualifications and the extra study that they have done.

Ongoing education and development of GPNs

GPNs will continue their learning in a range of different ways. They may attend workshops or study days, or longer courses that sometimes lead to honours degrees or Masters degrees. Some courses they attend may require them to learn new skills in practice – if this is the case, they will need to be supervised while learning. GPNs should view patients and carers as partners in their education and training, not as subjects of it. Informed consent for procedures is essential and patients should always be aware when the GPN is in training and being supervised. Procedures should be in place to notify patients attending a GPN supervised training session in advance, so that they can re-book to another non-training session if they feel this is necessary.

Carers will find the *Carers in Practice* leaflet produced by the Princess Royal Trust and RCGP useful for advice on their rights within a general practice setting.² One of the ways that patients can pass on their expertise and experiences to nurses that are training is through the Expert Patient scheme, where volunteer tutors can pass on their knowledge to GPNs managing long-term conditions.¹ Higher education institutions (HEIs) are strongly encouraged to involve patients in curriculum development. Either ask your GPN who the local tutor is or contact your local HEI directly. HEIs will be happy to hear your views, although you may have to be proactive in contacting them – they will be only too pleased to hear from you.

As a patient, you have the following rights:

- *you should always be informed if you are seeing a GPN who is being supervised*
- *any discussion about the supervision should not exclude you as the patient*
- *it should be made clear to you what the purpose of the supervised session is*
- *you should be treated with dignity and respect*
- *it should be made clear to you that your consultation remains bound within the rules of confidentiality*
- *you should always be asked if you are happy for a student nurse to treat you and you have the right to refuse without prejudice*
- *GPNs and supervisors should always thank you for your help and co-operation with training*
- *you should not be treated with any less care or attention if you do not wish to have the supervised GPN care for you.*

If you have a problem with any of the above, your comments should be reported to the practice manager at the earliest opportunity. Your feedback, whether positive or negative, is essential for the effective training of GPNs to continue.

References

1. NHS. *Expert Patients Programme*. NHS; 2003. Available at: <http://www.expertpatients.nhs.uk/involved.shtml>.
2. Royal College of General Practitioners and The Princess Royal Trust for Carers. *Carers in Practice*. 2006. Available at: <http://www.carers.org/data/carers-in-practice-carers-1716.pdf>.