

School Nurses Forum NEWSLETTER

www.rcn.org.uk/schoolnurses

Contents

- 2 Letter from the Chair
HPV vaccine
Recipes for allergy sufferers
New healthy schools poster
- 3 CF project launch
Spring conference report
- 4 Internet resources
- 5 School nurses and young
people's mental health
Smoking cessation with young
people in Wales
- 6 Independent School News

Further information

Send contributions for the next
newsletter by 27 September 2007
to:

Barbara Richardson-Todd
Email: [Barbara.richardson-todd@
ntlworld.com](mailto:Barbara.richardson-todd@ntlworld.com)

Letter from the Editor

Speak up and stand tall! It might tip the scales in your favour

BARBARA RICHARDSON-TODD weighs in on the
ongoing issues of recruitment and training.

Welcome back after the spring break – I hope you haven't eaten too much chocolate and are ready for the weighing and measuring of reception and Year 6 children! Hopefully, this year we are more prepared, as we have our scales and equipment and also have some idea of the timing involved. Good luck to everyone, and please let me know how you get on, and if you have any problems or best practice to share.

How can we possibly do it?

The main concern I have regarding school nursing at present is the lack of primary care trusts' (PCTs') understanding of the necessity to train and recruit more school nurses. In my area, as in many other areas, sponsorship for the school nursing specialist practice degree course has been cancelled for the coming year. As a practice teacher, it concerns me on many levels, not least on the issue of how we can possibly have one full-

time, year-round qualified school nurse per high school cluster by 2010. We need double, if not three times, the number of school nurses nationally to reach this target.

Show them the facts ...

We must keep raising our profile and the best way to gain the attention of our PCTs is to provide them with statistics of what we do and how effective we are at contributing to their targets. This is no mean feat, but we need to start collecting those figures. Let me know what is happening in your area, what statistics you are collecting and how you are doing this.

I have had some comments about the lack of information regarding Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. If you are working in these three countries, please let me know what is happening there, as I would love to include more information on this.

NUTRITION – LET'S THINK ABOUT FOOD

Book your place for the RCN Nutrition Conference and Exhibition, to be held Thursday, 28 June 2007, at RCN headquarters, London.

This conference will provide you with the latest information about the health effects of nutrition in children, young people and adults, celebrate and share good practice and look to the future regarding the impact of nutrition on various aspects of health.

Topics such as 'the effects of media on nutrition' and 'responsibility and accountability' will prove popular, and there will be several practical workshops and eminent speakers. For further information, please contact: Priya Tekchandani, Conference and Events Organiser, RCN, telephone: 020 7647 3581, email: nutrition@rcn.org.uk, or visit: www.rcn.org.uk/events

Letter from the Chair **JOY WINKS discusses conferences, past, present and future.**

Nothing to sneeze at!

Welcome to the summer edition of your newsletter. The forum has been very busy in the last few months. In fact, your views have even been represented in the House of Lords, when two forum members were asked to be witnesses to a science and technology committee evidence-gathering session, for a report to be produced on allergies.

The forum also held a successful national conference at RCN headquarters in London on 30 March, where keynote speakers spoke very positively about the contribution school nurses can, and do, make to the lives of children and young people (see article, page three). There was excellent contrast made between global drivers for change, our need for knowledge of those drivers and the difference that we, as practitioners, can make on an individual level to a child or young person and their family, when dealing with issues such as bereavement. One of the speakers talked about there needing to be 'an army of school nurses' to facilitate better public health for our

children and young people. This was very heartening to hear, and we must keep lobbying at local and national level for this to turn into reality. When the evaluation of the conference has been collated, we will post it on our web page, which is in the process of being made active and up to date.

Something to look forward to

Our next conference, titled 'Home or away', will be held 30 August 2007 – places are being booked very quickly, so do consider coming. At the time of reading this, I hope we shall have had a very active week in April at RCN Congress in Harrogate, and I hope to have met some of you there, perhaps at our fringe event, to introduce the training pack for school nurses to use in schools when dealing with long-term medical conditions (produced by Asthma UK). If not, perhaps I will meet you in August at our conference, by email, or on the CYP Field of Practice (FoP) Discussion Zone – remember, the forum is here to represent your views in the RCN, so please keep in touch.

Recipes for allergy sufferers

Kirsten Greenwood has a severe nut allergy and at age 11 years has written a book entitled *My nut-free recipe book*. Kirsten collected together the recipes from friends and family as a positive way to deal with her nut allergies and to enable other severely allergic children to enjoy delicious, nut-free food. All proceeds from the sale of the book are being donated to The Anaphylaxis Campaign. The price of the book is £6.99 plus £2.50 for postage and packing. You can buy the book direct from her mother at email: anne@sciencenow.com

HPV vaccine

SARAH JARVIS, a GP from London, gave a fascinating seminar at Congress 2007 at Harrogate, on the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which school nurses are anticipating. Forum member Lesley Taylor reports.

Sarah discussed the fact that 99.7 per cent of cervical cancer is caused by the HPV virus, which is transmitted by intimate contact but not by sexual intercourse. Ten per cent of smears are inadequate and twenty-one women die each week, on average, in the UK from cervical cancer. HPV can also cause genital warts: there are 80,000 diagnoses of this per year and rising.

Every woman can get HPV and it is not necessarily by having several partners – it could be by sleeping with a partner who has had several sleeping partners. HPV is common and awareness is low. Men also can get HPV, which may lead to genital warts, penile cancer or anal cancer.

What the vaccine can do

Sarah went on to discuss the efficacy of the HPV vaccine. It could prevent 75 per cent

of cancers and genital warts. The vaccine is licensed at the moment for 9 to 15 year olds and women aged 16 to 26. There are three injections of 0.5 mls, given at zero, two months and three months. The vaccine is generally well tolerated but could cause a slight temperature.

The cost is £80 per vaccine. If parents decide to have their daughters vaccinated privately, it may cost approximately £150 per vaccine. The immunisation programme will be for 12 to 14 year olds, just as girls have started secondary school.

The programme is to be discussed in May 2007 and will hopefully be ready to be rolled out in September 2007. School nurses – watch this space for information, as this may mean our workload will be on the increase – and in the meantime, we need to get the message across to parents and young people.

NEW HEALTHY SCHOOLS POSTER

Check out the healthy schools website, at: www.healthyschools.gov.uk, for the latest downloadable school nurses poster and leaflet from the Department of Health.

● www.healthyschools.gov.uk/Content.aspx?ContentType=2&ContentID=230

Being like everyone else – harder than you'd think?

The Children's Hospice South West Research Group, based at the University of Exeter, is closely associated with the charity Children's Hospice South West. Together, they have come up with an innovative new project focusing on giving children and young people with cystic fibrosis (CF) a stronger voice in a school setting.

The BLEEP Project

The title came from the words of a mother in the last project whose child had cystic fibrosis:

*"Well, I think it's good for her to go to a mainstream school and be normal. It's **being like everybody else.**"*

Project aims

In this research project (BLEEP), we investigated the experiences at mainstream school of young people aged 7 to 19 years in the south west of England with cystic fibrosis or degenerative neuromuscular conditions. The aim of the research was to identify the extent to which these young people experience disadvantage and social exclusion within mainstream education and to suggest approaches to overcoming this by identifying good existing practices and suggesting new approaches. The research focused

on collecting evidence, primarily from the young people themselves, and secondly, from their parents and teachers.

We have produced two booklets based on the research findings: *Including young people with cystic fibrosis in mainstream education* and *Including young people with degenerative neuromuscular conditions in mainstream education*. Our aim is to distribute these to as many schools, colleges and any other interested parties as possible.

We hope we have given these young people with cystic fibrosis or degenerative neuromuscular disease a 'voice' of their own about the situation of attending mainstream school, which can sometimes be problematic for them and can also be a place where they may feel they have had little opportunity to express their views.

To order copies of the booklets and/or reports of the research findings, please contact Tricia Nash on telephone: 01392 263273 or email: PTSNash@exeter.ac.uk. For a limited period, there is no charge for both booklets for schools and colleges in the south west of England or professionals working in schools. The CF booklet is free of charge UK-wide at the moment, whilst supplies last.

RCN School Nurse Conference – spring report

'Every school nurse matters' was the apt title for the sold-out School Nurses Forum Conference on 30 March 2007, held at RCN headquarters in London. Forum member ELSA CHADDAWAY reports on an uplifting day where much networking was achieved.

Opening the conference, Forum Chair Joy Winks made reference to the difficult times that some primary care trusts (PCTs) are experiencing at the present time and how this is impacting on what school nurses are able to offer. Despite these sobering words, it was heartening to see so many enthusiastic delegates.

Catherine Lowenhoff, Nurse Advisor for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), shared her thoughts with us on whether the *Every child matters* agenda is making a difference to children's lives. Catherine noted that a 'quiet revolution' was happening, adding that while some progress is occurring, it is not in all areas, and it is too early to say. Catherine also mentioned that she was eager to hear of innovative practice in school nursing – please contact her at the DfES if you can provide information on this in your school or community.

What a child wants

Alison Penny, Policy and Communications

Co-ordinator from the Child Bereavement Trust, gave the delegates food for thought on what children tend to want when they are bereaved. Alison presented the reality – that three quarters of children 11-16 years old have been bereaved of someone close to them, and that 70 per cent of primary schools will have at least one recently bereaved child. A DVD from Leeds Animation workshop for children is available from public libraries and an associated training pack for professionals from www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Getting down to practicals

Delegates took part in workshops during the day, including those held by Brook Advisory Centres on working with sexually active under-16s, as well as workshops on managing diabetes and severe allergies in school. The fourth workshop, about practical ways to consult with children and young people, was very topical and provided delegates

with some real ideas and resources. Try www.nc-cf.org.uk for a publication called *Evaluator's cookbook*.

Government views

The afternoon continued with Tony Armstrong from the Department of Health (DH) updating delegates on Government initiatives on tackling obesity. Resources you may find useful are *Top tips for top mums* and *Lightening the load*, both available from www.dh.gov.uk/obesity

Tim Loughton, MP Shadow Minister for Children and Health, rounded off the day and spoke enthusiastically about public health needing a higher focus, adding that early intervention is essential. Tim stated that there were too few school nurses and that an 'army' of school nurses is crucial. In answer to a question from the audience, Tim stated that a future Conservative government would ring-fence public health monies devolved to PCTs.

INTERNET RESOURCES

CYP policy review

In July 2006, the Government launched a policy review of children and young people (CYP), looking at what could be done to improve the life chances of children and young people. Sub-reviews have focused on disabled children, youth services, and families and children at risk of becoming locked in a cycle of low achievement, high harm and high cost.

- www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/02F/49/cyp_policyreview090107.pdf

The first report, out in March 2007, from the CYP policy review is *Aiming high for children: supporting families*. It focuses on giving support to families in a cycle of low achievement, giving proactive support for those who need it most, greater personalisation of services, and a new emphasis on building resilience.

- www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9D2/78/cyp_supportingfamilies290307.pdf

Every parent matters

This document, published in April 2007, sets out the important role of parents in improving their child's life chances and educational attainment as well as the role of government in supporting them to achieve this.

- www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=11184

Every child matters

Every child matters: extended schools and health services – working together for better outcomes for children and families (2006), available online.

- www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/B491875A026BoDo6329263DDE365CC28.pdf

Childhood obesity

Children in 250 schools in deprived areas have been given pedometers to help tackle childhood obesity and encourage them to become more active.

- www.schoolsonthemove.co.uk/public/index/index.htm

See also:

- *Tackling child obesity – first steps*, the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee – www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmpubacc/157/157.pdf
- *Obesity guidance for healthy schools co-ordinators and their partners*, DH
- 'Clinical guideline 43 on overweight and obesity in adults and children', NICE – www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG43

Sexual health

Now available online:

- DfES has published *Extended schools: improving access to sexual health advice services*, in response to requests for practical advice and support on setting up school-based health advice services – www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/10789/Sexual%20Health%20Advice.pdf

Healthy radio

Bridgwater in Somerset has set up an Internet-based radio station, called 'Healthy AM', providing music and information often produced by local school-aged population. Visit: www.healthy.fm

Research shows need for more school nurses

'Born unequal', published in March 2007 by the Fabian Society, calls for more school nurses to tackle the health issues of our young people. Young people interviewed stated that they would prefer to see someone with a medical background rather than a teacher when dealing with health issues. The report states that school nurses are best placed to deal with health issues and sex education.

The Fabian Society concludes: 'Every school should have its own school nurse, based on site, to help tackle child obesity, nutritional problems and teenage pregnancy.'

- www.fabian-society.org.uk:80/press_office/press.asp?cat=21

Children's Trust pathfinders for improving children and young people's well-being

This report, out in March 2007, is a joint venture between DfES and DH, which took three years and involved 35 pathfinder trusts.

- www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/childrenstrustpathfinders/nationalevaluation

Diabetes increase

There has been an increase in the under-5 age group of children who have diabetes. Type 1 diabetes affected one child in every 1,000 in 2004, according to Diabetes UK.

- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/6455653.stm>

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a barbaric, mutilating practice that has, in most cases, severe physical and psychological lasting effects. Currently, around 7,000 young girls in the UK are at risk of this. Please look at this new website and do whatever you can to help stop this practice and its consequences.

- www.fgmnationalgroup.org

Texts for allergy alerts

A text messaging service has been launched by the Food Standards, to notify if a food product could be a possible risk. To sign up, text 'START ALLERGY' to 62372. The initial text will be charged at your network provider's rate.

Accident safety

A new 74-page report, *Better safe than sorry: preventing unintentional injury to children* outlines a more thorough approach to preventing accidental childhood injuries.

- www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/_db/_documents/Better_Safe_Than_Sorry_Preventing_Unintentional_Injury_to_Children.pdf

School nurses and young people's mental health

MARK HADDAD, a nurse research fellow at the Institute of Psychiatry (IoP), King's College London, together with colleagues from the IoP and the mental health charity, Rethink, has been successful in a research bid that will be of interest to school nurses.

... among people with mental health problems at the age of 26, half had met the criteria for a disorder by age 15.

The Health Foundation (www.health.org.uk) is an independent charity that promotes quality improvement in UK health care by organising a range of research and development projects. Mark and his colleagues were awarded funding from the Health Foundation's Engaging with Quality in Primary Care initiative (www.health.org.uk/current_work

[/demonstration_projects/ewq_pc.html](#)), for a project centred on the role of school nurses in promoting mental health and managing emotional disorders in 11 to 18 year olds.

CYP and mental health

Children and young people make up one quarter of the total population of England, and mental health problems in this population group are an important public health issue. These problems are a source of suffering, behavioural problems, and impaired function and achievement. Depression, in particular, is linked to poor academic performance, social dysfunction, substance misuse, and suicide. Mental health problems impact not only the individual concerned, but also have adverse effects on families and carers. These problems in childhood often persist, increasing the risk of mental illness in adult life: among people with mental health problems at the age of 26, half had met the criteria for a disorder by age 15¹.

The prevalence of mental health problems in children is high: around 10 per cent of 5 to 15 year olds have a psychiatric disorder, including 4 per cent with emotional disorder (anxiety and depression)². However, only one quarter of British schoolchildren with diagnosed mental disorder have specialist mental health service contact³: most children with these problems consult teachers and school-based services, and these frontline staff play a vital role in identifying, managing, and accessing additional services for these children.

Where school nurses fit

School nurses are well placed to play a central role with children and young people's mental health problems. Successive policy documents have noted and reiterated this, and the National Service Framework for Children and Young

People⁴ states (Standard 9) that all staff working directly with this group should have: 'sufficient knowledge, training and support to promote psychological well-being and to identify early indicators of difficulty'.

Project aims

This project aims to identify best practice (and obstacles to effective working) in the area by reviewing the literature, surveying current initiatives and consulting key players – especially school nurses. A range of training materials, brief interventions, protocols, support and self-help resources will be developed; and the benefits of these materials and developments will be evaluated in a study planned to involve 13 PCTs in the south Thames area.

One of the first parts of the project will involve a survey of school nurses in the UK concerning their mental health practice and needs in this area: so you may well be hearing from Mark and his colleagues in the near future!

Any readers interested in this topic may contact: Mark Haddad at email: m.haddad@iop.kcl.ac.uk

References

1. Maughan B, Kim-Cohen J (2005) Continuities between childhood and adult life, *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 187, pp.301–3.
2. Meltzer et al. (2000) *Mental health of children and adolescents in Great Britain*, London: The Stationary Office.
3. Ford et al. (2006) *Child mental health is everybody's business: the prevalence of contacts with public sector services by types of disorder among British school children in a three-year period*. In press.
4. Department of Health (2004) *National service framework (NSF) for children, young people and maternity services*, London: The Stationary Office. Available from: www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/ChildrenServices/fs/en. (Internet).



SMOKING CESSATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN WALES

In Wrexham, the school nurses are working collaboratively across organisations to deliver a targeted preventative service to young people. They work with the National Public Health Service, the local authority, the youth service and specifically with youth workers who are school based. This project is specifically targeted at Year 10 and 11 pupils in the local high school, where the school nurses run a smoking cessation group over a six-week period, offer ongoing support during drop-in sessions and supervise the use of nicotine patches.

For further information, please contact Lesley Taylor at email: lesley.taylor@new-tr.wales.nhs.uk

Independent School News

Sarah Day gives an update

Judging by members' feedback, the email network appears to be working well, with information being passed through on a regular basis. I am grateful to all those who make the effort to respond. If you have still not made a connection with a co-ordinator, please email me for your nearest group.

Seeking recognition and information

So many independent school nurses still feel isolated and vulnerable. I cannot argue this and understand the constant battle of having to go out and seek what's new. How did we manage before the Internet? We have more information available to us than ever before, but we must continue to fight for recognition and support. PCTs and our state school nursing colleagues prove to be essential, but often difficult, liaisons, especially in today's climate. Speak to your bursars, use your budgets and purchase support/contracts if needs be. We still have issues over patient group directives (PGDs) and nurse prescribing, but times are changing and the RCN is pushing for support. Your school medical officers should also support you and links with the Medical Officers of Schools Association (MOSA) and nurses are currently at an all-time high following another very interesting and sociable meeting on 13 January 2007. Check their website for details.

A training first

Following talks with the Boarding School Association (BSA), Kathy Compton, an independent school nurse, and myself are working out a training module as part of the BSA certificate. This will be the first ever-training package specifically for independent school nurses and will be available to day schools as well as boarding schools – very exciting.

Our summer conference on 30 August 2007 is planned and will be packed with excellent speakers to update and share your knowledge and skills. I apologise for members further north, but it will be held in London again, as this is still considered to be the most central and accessible location. I hope to see you all there (*see this page for further details*).

PS – the new 'Green Book', known as *Immunisation against infectious disease*, was released in December 2006. It can be purchased at: www.tsoshop.co.uk, quoting ISBN-10 0-11-322528-8.

Keep in touch.

Sarah Day is the Chair of the RCN Independent School Nurses Group

RCN EVENTS

RCN Independent School Nurses Sub-group annual conference and exhibition

Home or Away

Thursday 30 August 2007

The Royal College of Surgeons, London WC2A 3PE

As school nurses we have a key role in identifying the physical and mental health needs of children and young people and planning their care. We also have a significant responsibility in delivering effective health education. This year's conference will deliver an exciting programme of popular updates to enhance your practice.

Plenary sessions include:

- **Techniques in Delivering Health Messages**
Loud Mouth Educational Theatre Company
- **Independent Schools and Nurses Employed Directly by Schools**
Catherine Lowenhoff, Nurse Adviser, Department for Education and Skills (DfES), London
- **Sexual Health and Confidentiality in Schools**
Simon Blake, Chief Executive, Brook, London
- **The Changing Epidemiology of TB and the BCG Vaccination Programme**
Gary Porter-Jones, Health Protection Nurse, Health Protection Team, National Public Health Service for Wales

Workshop sessions include:

- **Asthma UK's New Training Pack**
Patrick Ladbury, Children and Young People's Service Development Manager, Asthma UK
- **Travel Health**
Sandra Grieve, Travel Health Specialist Nurse Adviser, Droitwich Spa Hospital, Worcestershire
- **Basic Skills in CBT**
Adrian Williams, Clinical Nurse Specialist, YOT/ CAMS
- **Dermatology for Schools**
Sandra Lawton, Nurse Consultant Dermatology, Queens Medical Centre, Nottingham

Further information

Guillia Ward, RCN Events, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN

Tel: 020 7647 3591

Fax: 020 7647 3411

Email: indieschoolnurses@rcn.org.uk

Website: www.rcn.org.uk/events



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