

The quarterly magazine for RCN STUDENTS

the answer

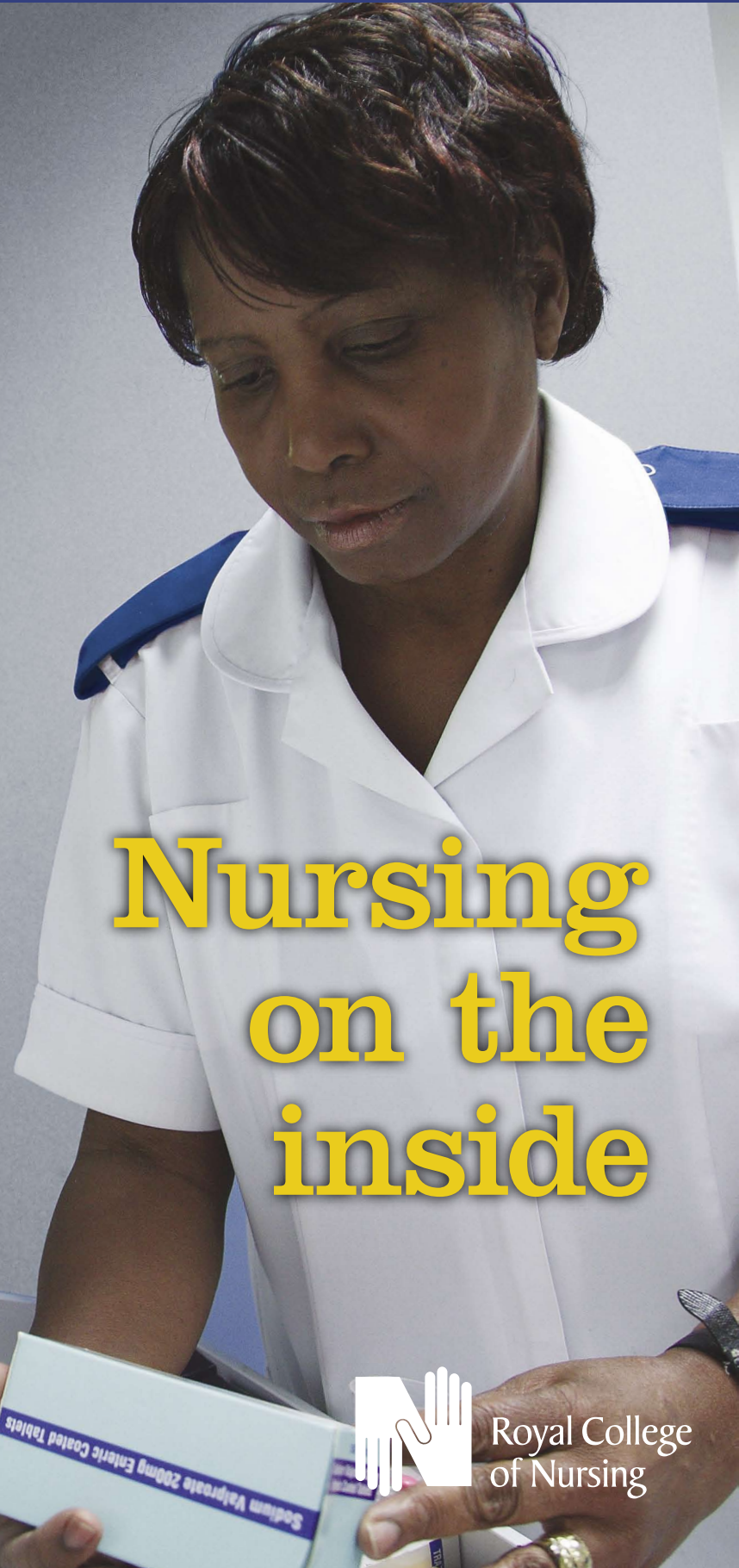
Autumn 2007

IN THIS ISSUE:

Doing time? One student's placement in a prison

Modernising nursing careers
– what does it mean for you?

Learning to live with dyslexia
– how to cope during your studies



Nursing on the inside



Royal College
of Nursing

Your RCN, your career, your voice!

RCN Student Roadshow 2007-08

From 2007 you will no longer need to travel from all over the UK to London to attend our annual Student Conference. This time, we're bringing it to you.

Each conference will:

- provide you with key skills that will help you stand above the rest when applying for your first job
- provide speakers who will inspire and empower you
- provide you with the information and guidance needed to ensure you can fully utilise our student services
- tell you what the RCN is doing in your area
- introduce you to your local ANS Executive Committee member

Conference content*

- Welcome from RCN General Secretary Dr Peter Carter (via DVD)
- The importance of hydration – Amanda Steane
- Transition from student to staff nurse – Bethann Siviter
- CV and interview techniques
- NMC pre-registration review
- Diversity
- Open debate on student issues
- Welcome to the community
- What can you get from the RCN?

* Please note that conference content may vary based on speaker availability and venue constraints

Booking form

RCN Student Roadshow

Your details

RCN student member? Yes No RCN member no.

Title First name

Surname

University / College

Year of Study (e.g. First) Degree or Diploma

Preferred mailing address:

Postcode:

Tel no (daytime)

Email address

Specific requirements (dietary/accessibility)

Please indicate which regional conference you would like to attend, venues will be confirmed on receipt of booking:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14 November (South West) | <input type="checkbox"/> 28 November (Eastern) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16 January (North West) | <input type="checkbox"/> 30 January (Northern) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 February (Northern Ireland) | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 February (Scotland, Edinburgh) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 27 February (Wales) | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 March (Yorkshire & the Humber) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 26 March (East Midlands) | <input type="checkbox"/> 9 April (West Midlands) |

Please note that places are subject to venue capacity. Places will be granted on a first come, first served basis.

Conference fees

Delegate fee: £10.00 This amount will be refunded to all RCN student members who attend the regional conference indicated above. Non-attendees will not receive a refund. Non-RCN members will receive a refund if they join the RCN during the day of the conference. Please note that this fee covers your registration fee, lunch and conference materials. It does not include travel.

Payment

By cheque: (made payable to 'The Royal College of Nursing')
I enclose a cheque for £10.00

Credit/Debit card: I authorise you to debit my:

VISA / MASTERCARD / MAESTRO / SWITCH (please circle) for £10.00

Card number

Issue no (if applicable) Security code Start date

Expiry date Cardholder's name

Cardholder's billing address

Post this booking form with payment to: Laura King, Student Administrator,
Royal College of Nursing, Room 401, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN

Telephone: 020 7647 3758 **Email:** ans@rcn.org.uk

All bookings will be confirmed by email.

Editorial

Autumn is such an exciting time of year as so many changes are going on in the academic world of nursing! Welcome to all new students who are embarking on nursing courses, but farewell to those of you who are just heading off into the world of work. In this issue, you'll find a feature on the invaluable work of prison nurses which I hope helps inspire you in your career choices. And finally welcome back to those of you who, like me, are leaping the final few hurdles towards qualification in the New Year.

I recently heard an interesting speech on the use of Web 2.0 technology in the world of education. Web 2.0 technologies are dynamic, online communities in which users can interact and communicate with one another – namely, social networking websites such as Facebook and MySpace. Just last month the RCN launched its new look, interactive website to meet the increasing demands of members. These websites provide everyone with instant access to friends and colleagues despite geographical distances.

“Web 2.0 technologies can support you in your professional life”

Well I'm certainly hooked! I have been reunited with long-forgotten pals and formed friendships with people who would otherwise have been fleeting acquaintances. But, as well as enhancing your social life, these services can also provide unprecedented opportunities for communication and support in your professional life. They are a great way to create informal channels of communication with mentors, colleagues, lecturers and anyone else using the technology.



However, there is a certain amount of caution and responsibility you should exercise when using these sites. Remember that they are essentially in the public domain, which means that what you post could be viewed by potential employers, future patients or even your parents! This doesn't mean you shouldn't upload amusing pictures or speak your mind online, but I would urge you to stop and consider the possible consequences and stay safe.

This year, instead of inviting you to the annual student conference in London, we are bringing it to you! We are now in the midst of the Student Roadshow, which has an exciting line-up of guest speakers, discussions and workshops. Details and a booking form are on the opposite page or from the student area of RCN website, so make sure you join us at your nearest venue.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *the answer*, but if you have any opinions, suggestions or articles, please email me or one of the team. You will find more information about submitting articles on page 11.

Have a great couple of months and enjoy the Christmas break.

Chris Brown is consultant editor of *the answer*

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the answer

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Laura King

news

Join the RCN Student Roadshow!

We've decided to give the one-day annual student conference a re-vamp, so this year we are travelling around the UK to bring the conference to you!

The RCN Student Roadshow started in October in London and will be working its way around the UK until next April.

Each show has informative and inspiring speakers, all dedicated to reaching and empowering the UK's nursing students. There'll be Amanda Steane, who will talk from personal experience about the

importance of hydration for patients, and Bethann Siviter, who will be talking to you about the transition from nursing student to staff nurse. We'll also be addressing big issues including the ongoing NMC pre-registration review (see page 10) and diversity, and there will be an open debate with local RCN staff and representatives where you can raise any concerns, ask questions and discuss what is affecting you in your area. Plus you'll get to meet your regional ANS Executive Committee member.

Conferences are open to all students, so if you are unable to attend your local event, you can go elsewhere in the country. You can find dates and booking details on the inside front cover or online at www.rcn.org.uk/students. If you know of fellow students who would like to attend but are not RCN members, ask them to email us at ans@rcn.org.uk

We look forward to seeing you there!

A big welcome to all new students!

Hello! I'm Gill Robertson, the RCN's Student Adviser. Firstly, thank you for choosing the RCN to support you during your studies and, I hope, well into your nursing careers. As a student, it's important to have access to learning resources, advice, protection and support – the RCN offers you all this, plus much, much more.

By becoming an RCN member, you have automatically joined the Association of Nursing Students, the RCN's networking, information and lobbying group for student members across the UK. The ANS is represented by the Executive Committee who work hard to campaign on behalf of nursing students on issues such as NHS bursaries, maternity benefits and practice placements.

Your first port of call should be the student area of the RCN website at www.rcn.org.uk/students where you will find all the information and tools to help you make the most out of your membership.

If you have any questions, comments, ideas or would like to find out more about becoming an ANS representative, drop me a line on ans@rcn.org.uk



Education 'beyond the borders'

The RCN Joint Education Forums recently held their first international conference in Brighton. The event focused on nurse education throughout the international community, and speakers explored the differences and similarities in the education of nurses around the world. A series of workshops and fringe events focused on students and ANS members were invited to speak about the issues that nursing students face on a daily basis.

It was a great success, so we hope that the conference becomes a regular fixture on the RCN calendar. Check online for future dates.

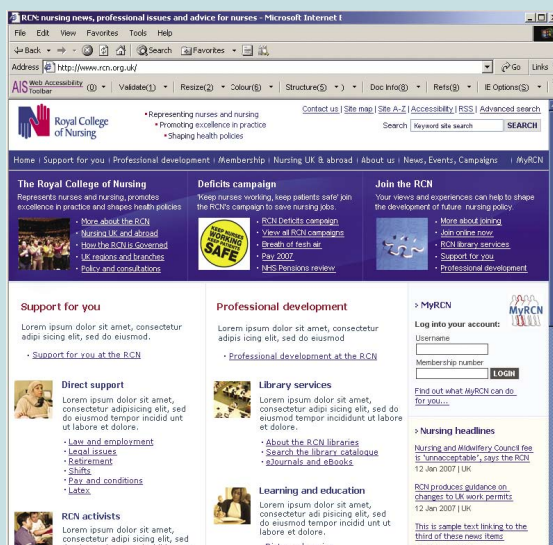
news

RCN launches brand new interactive website!

If you enjoy social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, then check out the brand new RCN website. It was launched last month and now includes an exciting range of interactive features.

In an extensive survey, RCN members asked for a more accessible, user-friendly, interactive and member-driven website. So the RCN web team took the findings to develop a new design and a social networking structure, which allows users to create their own content and communicate with people with similar interests.

The team plans to introduce networks of weblogs, user profiles, web forums, and groups, as well as other media formats, such as audio and video files, in the future.



Log on today to find out what the website can do for you at www.rcn.org.uk

ANS supports Manchester Pride

In August, representatives of the ANS joined the RCN's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) Network at Manchester Pride 2007,



to demonstrate their support for minorities in the workplace.

Despite the rain, the ANS led the RCN in the Mardi Gras (Gay Pride) parade, holding the RCN banner

for thousands to see. The RCN also ran a stand to raise awareness of the help and support systems available from the RCN. Here visitors could

express their views on any issues they faced at work.

We had a lot of positive feedback, but we could always do with more help and ideas.

If you would like to help fight discrimination or have comments on equality and diversity issues, please contact us on ans@rcn.org.uk

News in brief

Date for your diary

Make a note of the dates for the next RCN Congress and Exhibition. Congress is the RCN's main debating event and this year is being held in Bournemouth. The event runs from **27 April to 1 May 2008**, but if you can't make the whole week, try and come along for Students' Day on **29 April**. We look forward to seeing you there!

For details, see www.rcn.org.uk/congress



Are you the student of the year?

The *Nursing Standard* Nurse Awards 2008 are now open for entries. There are ten award categories including one for student nursing.

For more details and to enter, go to www.nurseawards.co.uk

Learning about mental health

For a better understanding of the mental health and communication needs of people with learning disabilities, download the new RCN guidance from the website.

www.rcn.org.uk/publications

Sign up for e-services

Keep up with all the latest news by registering your email address with the RCN. We're working on new, faster and 'greener' ways of communicating with you electronically.

Sign up for the 'Email Service' today at www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn

ans 2007/2008

Introducing your new ANS Executive Committee

Following elections to the RCN Association of Nursing Students (ANS) Executive Committee, we are pleased to welcome the new members of the team, who will be working hard over the coming year to ensure that students are given the attention they deserve.

The Committee is made up of two student members of Council, one representative from each of the nine RCN English regions, and two from each of the other three countries, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Thank you to all the outgoing committee members for all their hard work and commitment over the past two years. We wish you lots of luck for your futures in nursing.

Here are your new committee members...

Naomi Baker Student Member of Council

I am currently a second year adult nursing student from Napier University in Scotland, although I am originally from Dublin. My main nursing interests are critical care and theatre nursing. Earlier this year, a friend and fellow nursing student urged me to join a trade union and suggested the RCN. After attending Congress 2007, I was eager to commit to a more active role within the student forum and so applied for this position. It has been a worthwhile decision.

Email: naomibaker1@yahoo.co.uk

Sarah Evans, Wales

I am currently in the second year of my adult branch training at the School of Healthcare Sciences in Wrexham. I will campaign on the issues that matter to you as students – more training places, a larger bursary and jobs for newly-qualified nurses. The RCN has a lot to offer you as students. I hope to hear from you with ideas to take forward to the committee, and I look forward to seeing you all in Bournemouth for Students' Day at Congress.

Email: Hsu71@bangor.ac.uk

Teresa Baldwin, Wales

I am a third year adult branch nursing student at the North East Wales Institute in Wrexham. From my involvement with the RCN, I know that, as an ANS representative for Wales, I can be your voice. So, if you have any concerns, ideas, suggestions or if you just want to 'vent your spleen', then please contact me.

Email: Red7761@supanet.com

Vic Thomas, East Midlands

I'm a third year Mental Health student at the University of Nottingham. I'm here to raise any issues you have regarding your studies, placements, or the continually generous bursary (!). In the East Midlands and nationally we're all watching the job situation. The RCN is heavily involved with negotiating and monitoring staff provision, so if you want to find out more, get in touch with me and I'll try to access the facts.

Email: Ntyzvjt@nottingham.ac.uk

Saffron Brown, Northern

I am in my first year at Northumbria University doing a BSc degree in Nursing. I am originally from Leeds, West Yorkshire but decided to venture further north to study. I am concerned about and am pushing for change and improvement in nurse education, and I welcome your views and queries. No matter how far into your studies you are, your opinions are very important. I am your advocate in this large organisation so please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Email: saffronbrown208@hotmail.com

Vicky Fletcher, South West

I'm based at Plymouth University and am currently undertaking my third year DipHE Nursing (Mental Health). I suffer from dyslexia and scotopic sensitivity, so I am very interested in how nursing students with dyslexia are supported. I'm also very passionate about service users gaining access to psychosocial interventions within mental health services. Also, how nursing students are treated on placements. Email me with any issues, concerns, ideas or suggestions you would like to raise.

Email: Victoria@fletcher1365.fslife.co.uk

They will work alongside:

Benn Mott, Student Member of Council
Chris Brown, Northern Ireland
Charlie Sloan, Scotland
Charlotte Taylor, Scotland
Sonia Vanner, Eastern
Jeannie Jones, North West
Victoria Harper, West Midlands
David Baker, Yorkshire and the Humber

We almost have a full committee, but there are still vacancies in the following regions: Northern Ireland, London, South East.

So what are you waiting for? If there is a seat available in your area and you want to make a difference, go for it! Contact Laura King, RCN Student Administrator on ans@rcn.org.uk

The ANS Strategy

What's on for the year ahead?

Every September the new ANS Executive Committee gets together to examine the issues facing nursing students – and this year was no exception!

Each issue has an action plan attached to it to enable work to be carried out to improve the lot of nursing and midwifery students:

Jobs

Jobs for newly qualified nurses are obviously a key issue for third year students. To help we are running a student roadshow around the UK where we will provide guidance for job seeking. We also have guest speaker Bethann Siviter, author of *Student Nurse Handbook – a Survival Guide*. **(See inside front cover about booking your place.)**

Bursaries

We will of course continue to campaign to improve the bursaries in all four countries. Work is being done to look at other benefits surrounding the bursaries. Recently the RCN was pivotal in an agreement to offer maternity support leave (what was once known as paternity leave) and adoption leave while allowing students to maintain their bursaries. **(See page 8.)**

Dyslexia

We know from speaking to you that dyslexia is now being reasonably well handled within the universities but is ignored or badly handled while you are on placement. We are working very closely with the RCN Practice Education Forum to produce a toolkit to help placements understand what dyslexia can mean to students and what they can do to help. That should be out later this year and we will let you know when it is available – make sure your ward has one! **(See page 9 for more about dyslexia.)**

Car parking and uniforms

Car parking raises its head every year, and we will be producing guidance on what steps you can take to try to challenge prohibitive car parking fees.

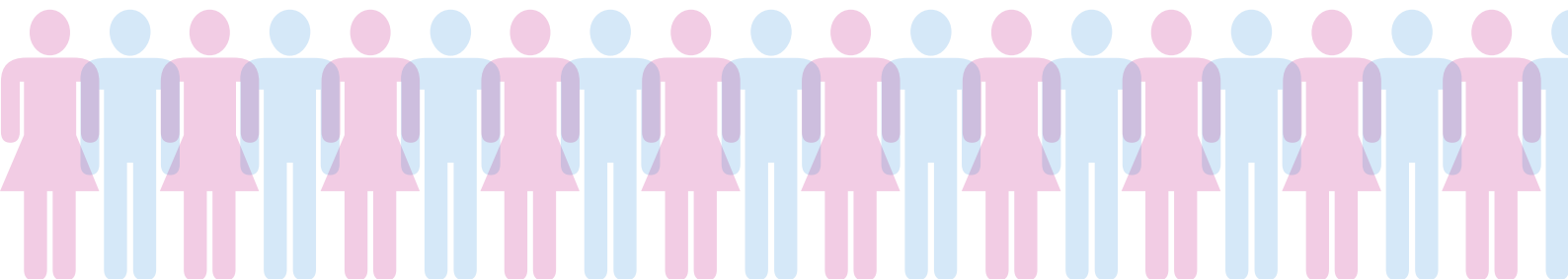
We will also follow up on reports we received that uniforms are hard to come by in some places and impossible to replace – this is not acceptable particularly in the current climate of concentrating on infection control.

Education

A key piece of work for this year will be responding to the NMC consultation on pre-registration education which is due out now. It examines the branch system and also degree or diploma level qualification, so this is one we will be asking for your input on. Information will be available from the RCN website. **(See page 10 for more about Modernising Nursing Careers.)**

The ANS Executive are deeply committed to pursuing matters on your behalf but often there is more power in numbers – keep an eye on the student area of the RCN website www.rcn.org.uk/students to see how you can help.

We would also like to hear any of your comments, complaints or compliments(!), so do email us on ans@rcn.org.uk



student matters



Bursary update: new adoption and maternity support announced

We are delighted to announce that, following joint work by the Department of Health, the RCN and other key stakeholders, new arrangements have been included in the NHS bursary package.

Pre-registration health care students who wish to adopt a child will be able to take a 45-week break from their studies and continue to receive their NHS bursary payments. The new adoption award mirrors the maternity award, and aims to ensure that students who might have otherwise had to abandon their studies can continue to pursue a career in the NHS.

A maternity support award has also been introduced. This will allow students whose partners have given birth up to four weeks' authorised absence, while continuing to receive their bursary payments. It is an interim arrangement for one year to allow the DH and trade unions to collect more information about the number of students who will take up this

award, before agreeing a permanent arrangement which will meet the needs of students and the service.

For more information about the updated NHS Bursary Scheme, go to www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk

University life can be demanding and stressful, especially around exam periods or if you are living away from home for the first time. For those of you with religious beliefs, your university will usually have pastoral support to help you cope with the ups and downs of student life.

Pastoral support can take many forms, from just visiting your minister for a chat or going to the multi-faith room to pray. There are also international ministers to meet the requirements of all denominations and faiths.

Many universities have chaplaincy support with a wide variety of services to meet individual needs. University chaplains are supported in their work by the local churches, and they also work closely with advisers for different

Finding pastoral support

faiths to enable them to support all students, regardless of religious belief.

The university will also have a Christian union, which is usually run by the chaplains with the help and support of students. Christian unions will assist you in developing your faith through prayer, as well as providing a support-network and organising activities.

To make an appointment with the chaplaincy team at your university phone your student services, tell them your faith and they will be able to provide you with an email address or telephone number to contact your local pastor.

If you have a story about pastoral support, or if you are having problems accessing it, please contact your ANS Executive committee member or email ans@rcn.org.uk

student experiences

Learning to live with dyslexia

Victoria Harper, the West Midlands ANS representative, takes a deep breath and gives some advice on coping with dyslexia as a nursing student:

“My name is Victoria. I am a second year nursing student and I have dyslexia. There. I’ve said it.

At the start of every placement I say this, just after taking a deep breath and trying not to shake. It’s a scary moment. How much does my mentor understand? Are they sympathetic? Will they worry that I will be unsafe on the ward?

I am not alone. One in ten nursing students has a learning disability which we may or may not choose to disclose when we are on placement.

There is no typical dyslexic student, and no one adaptation will suit everyone. This confusion makes life difficult for mentors and ward staff. After four placements I now have some reasonable adaptations and ‘tricks’ that help me. I hope these suggestions will help you too.

- Carry post-it notes in your pocket to jot down things you might forget.
- Use credit card-sized coloured overlays to make reading printed information easier.
- Use coloured highlighter pens on your handover sheet
- Carry a pocket medical spell-checker – for when you are writing and to decode medical notes.
- Carry a calculator – it’s reassuring if you need to check calculations.
- If noise distracts you take notes to an office to document patient care.



- Use a Dictaphone to record your handover – many staff will agree to this if you explain.
- Above all – talk to your mentor. Explain how dyslexia affects you personally and how your mentor can help you. Remember this may be the first time they have mentored a student with dyslexia and it can be a steep learning curve. However it will benefit their professional development and improve their knowledge too.

Ultimately, it is your choice whether or not to disclose your dyslexia. Remember that all people with dyslexia are individuals. All of us have many positive qualities and we are valuable members of a team.

I choose to explain my dyslexia to my mentors, and I have only had positive experiences.”

Dyslexia is a learning disability that affects about 10 per cent of the population. So how do you overcome it and make sure you reach your potential?

Help is at hand

The good news is that help is available for students. Each university or higher education institution will have a policy on disability awareness and support and will have learning support services.

A fine example is the Disability Assist Services at Plymouth University. Their services are dedicated to helping students with disabilities, including those with dyslexia, to give them the same chance as their peers in succeeding in their studies.

They teach specialist study skills to enable students with learning disabilities to become more effective and efficient learners by developing learning methods that work for them. Students are given revision and exam techniques, and tips for essay writing, time management, research, interactive reading and presentations. The study skills are very effective in helping students to cope with their workloads, decreasing stress levels and improving marks. Many students have also expressed their relief at being tutored by people who understand their particular learning and life difficulties.

If you are affected by dyslexia or want further advice about accessing support, visit the British Dyslexia Association website at www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

careers

Modernising Nursing Careers: what does it mean for students?

RCN Policy Adviser Jane Naish explains more



Pre-registration nurse education has changed and evolved enormously over the years. It was originally based on an apprentice model, when students learnt 'onsite' and were salaried members of the nursing workforce.

However, from the 1970s changes were made to the curriculum in a quest to ensure nurses were fit for purpose and met changing health needs. *Project 2000* later moved all nursing education into higher education institutions (HEIs), course length extended to three years, qualifications changed and students were no longer given a salary.

Now, pre-registration education is to undergo a review as part of the UK-wide Modernising Nursing Careers (MNC) programme to ensure nursing is fit for future health care needs and health care provision.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council will be carrying out the review, which will look closely at the content and academic exit level of nursing education, before issuing a consultation later in November.

The key issues

'Does current pre-registration education prepare nurses appropriately for the future?'

The arguments for changing pre-registration education are strong, and the review will focus on a number of key issues, including:

Community setting and nursing practice

It is clear that exposure and expertise in community settings must be increased if the intention is to shift patient care away from hospitals to the community. So, nursing education will need to include greater emphasis on local health and family context, and the accepted wisdom that first employment must be hospital-based will have to change. Length and quality of community practice placements will also need to be looked at to ensure students can develop these skills.

Branch or generalist preparation

Whilst working in the community, nurses will come across a range of disease conditions and illnesses. So a key issue is: to what level and at what depth should the pre-registration framework prepare nurses with knowledge and skills in a broad spectrum of care and illness? And how far should specialisation occur prior to first registration?

Graduate or diploma?

This has always been a subject of much debate. Arguments range from the need for a wide entry gate and the practical nature of nursing, to the need for parity with other health care professionals. The RCN supports a UK-wide all-graduate nursing profession but also the need for education and support for health care support workers.

The first 'MNC-registered' nurses are expected to emerge in 2014 so, although you will have completed your studies by then, the outcome of the consultation will affect nursing students of the future. The RCN will be submitting a response based on the opinions of members, so we urge you to join the debate and have your say when the consultation begins. Help make sure all nurses have modern, fit for purpose and progressive career paths.

Full details about *Modernising Nursing Careers* and the consultation are available at www.rcn.org.uk/policy



have your say

reading matters

Before you buy those lengthy nursing tomes, find out what other students have to say about them first:

Charlie Sloan reviews:

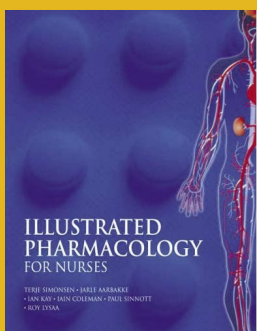


Student nurses' guide to professional practice and development (2006), edited by Jane Schober and Carol Ash.

This book has everything that a nursing student needs, from applying for a nursing course right through to registering with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. It covers all branches of nursing and gives you hints and tips on applying for your first job. It also has a useful section on career management and development for registered nurses. There are reflective activities throughout to test your knowledge and what you have learnt.

I would recommend this informative book to anyone who is already a nursing student and those considering applying for their first pre-registration nursing course.

Victoria Harper reviews:

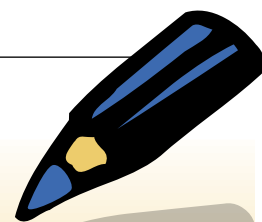


Illustrated pharmacology for nurses (2006) by Simonsen, Aarbakke, Kay, Coleman, Sinnott and Lysaa.

Simonsen et al have combined basic pharmacology and clinical pharmacology in one easy-to-read volume. Diagrams and illustrations are well-used to explain drug systems and mechanisms, with examples from outside of nursing (note the fish tanks used to explain plasma protein binding!).

The first half of the book gives a useful introduction to pharmacodynamics and kinetics, with an interesting history of drug development. The second half of the book is divided into organ systems, making it easy to dip into as you progress through your course. Each chapter includes some pathophysiology of the diseases covered and a useful summary. Paediatric and mental health students may find they require more detail than is included in the respective chapters on children and psychiatric disorders, however there is more than enough information for common foundation year studies.

It is a useful, well thought out textbook that could take students right through their course.



Could you write for *the answer*?

The answer is your magazine, so get more involved by writing for it. We are looking for articles and news for future issues and for the student pages on the website, so now is your chance to flex those literary muscles!

There are numerous benefits to writing for *the answer* and the website:

- share your views with other ANS members
- use your published article(s) to add to your portfolio
- stimulate debate on important nursing and student issues
- make other nursing students aware of important news that may affect them
- improve and develop your writing skills
- see your name in print or online.

How to contribute

- Download a copy of the *Guidelines for submission* from www.rcn.org.uk/students. Using this will greatly improve the chances of your article being published and make it easier to write.
- If your article is a short news story then you can simply submit it to theanswer@rcn.org.uk. For longer articles, first email us your idea and a structure. Once your idea has been accepted by the editor then you can write it and submit it.
- Ensure that you include contact details (including a telephone number) and a word count.

So get writing and get involved.

council and regional roundups

Council roundup

Over the summer, a significant chunk of Council's time was concerned with developments around the miserly NHS pay deal for 2007/08. A ballot of RCN members working in the NHS in England was held and more than 95 per cent of members voted in favour of moving to a formal second ballot on industrial action. The government then made an improved offer.

Council voted to accept a deal at a special delegate's conference in September. I personally think that, in order to secure a pay deal that reflects the work done by nurses every day of the year, we should concentrate our efforts on future negotiations. Any pay deal should not be based on the Government's spending policies but should be a reflection of hard work, experience and responsibilities. I also think that the future beckons a closer relationship with other public sector unions, but we shall see.

One other significant decision was the proposed new practice sectors. Council decided to put this part of the Professional Development Framework project on hold for the time being. A structure that engages more members in the services and development opportunities that can be offered by the RCN can only be supported, but for now it needs further work.

This was Andy Hart's last Council round-up. Your two Student Members of Council are:



Benn Mott

RCN Council

e: benmott@gedben.com



Naomi Baker

RCN Council

e: naomibaker1@yahoo.co.uk

Regional roundups

Northern Ireland

After a sleepy if rather wet summer, the Student Forum meetings are now resuming. All are welcome, so please email us for details.

The 2.5 per cent bursary rise has been awarded here in Northern Ireland so 'don't go spending it all in the one shop', as my granny used to say! Also it's good news that there are now posts available for newly-qualified nurses.

The Northern Ireland Students' Conference is returning on 6 February, so check the RCN website for details.

In the meantime if you are interested in getting involved or if you need support, please email us at any time.



Chris Brown

Northern Ireland

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Ross Mawhinney

Northern Ireland

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Scotland

Firstly, welcome to all new members just starting your fabulous careers and to those continuing your studies. Good luck and goodbye to Iain McGregor, who steps down as vice chair of the ANS and your executive member. I am pleased to welcome Charlotte Taylor as your new ANS Executive member for Scotland.

We will continue to work hard to ensure that the student voice is heard at all levels, and will keep you all informed online and in *the answer*. I urge you to use the RCN Discussion Zone to chat with other members about the issues affecting you.

If you have any questions, queries or concerns, please email me.



Charles Sloan

Scotland

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Iain McGregor

Scotland

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Wales

The Wales student conference will be held at Ty Maeth, RCN Wales HQ on 27 February. However, if you can't make it, you are welcome to go to any regional conference, so check the RCN website for more details.

Welcome to the new ANS representatives for Wales – Teresa Baldwin and Sarah Evans – we wish you both well in your work.

The two of us must now say goodbye. It's been good fun and exciting representing your views over the last two years and we would like to wish everybody the very best of luck in their training and their first jobs as newly qualified nurses.



Chris Cooper

Wales

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Iain McDonald

Wales

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East Midlands region

Congratulations to those of you who have just qualified as nurses and I hope many of you have managed to secure full time employment in areas you wish to work. Also welcome to those of you starting your careers in the NHS, I hope you have a fantastic time during your training.

I wish to thank everyone for supporting me in my role as your RCN representative for the last three years. I have had a brilliant time and made many new friends along the way. I have also enjoyed meeting so many of you at events across the UK and hearing your stories.

Finally, welcome to Vic Thomas, your new ANS regional representative. I wish her luck and lots of success in her new role.



Hannah Harwood

East Midlands

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regional roundups

Eastern region

Across the region, the majority of newly qualified nurses have secured employment with their local trust which is great news. However there is still a very small handful of NQNs unable able to get jobs and we continue to give them our support.

The Eastern region student conference will be held at the Wood Green Animal Shelter in Godmanchester on 28 November. Everybody is welcome and it will be a very useful event for students in their final year.

In the Eastern region we are desperately seeking students who are willing to be active within the RCN and help to get our voices heard. If you are interested in becoming a student information officer, please contact me.



Sonia Vanner
Eastern
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London region

Welcome to all new nursing students! This is your chance to gain invaluable skills and placement experiences that will help you make a difference to society.

I am pleased to report that issues of jobs for newly qualifieds and NHS deficits are gradually improving. Also, I have been working locally with mentors on the new practice-based assessment (PBA) portfolios, helping to understand what is expected of mentors and students for safe teaching and practices.

This is my last regional update, but should you wish to raise any issues and questions, please contact me.



Ayodele Tijani
London
e: joytij83@yahoo.co.uk

North West region

Well it's that time again! Welcome to all new students who have just commenced training, it's a monumental step and I hope that you enjoy it. Congratulations to all of you who have

just qualified – I hope many of you have jobs to go to, but for those of you who haven't, just keep on applying and don't lose hope.

The North West regional conference takes place on 16 January – go to www.rcn.org.uk/students for more information. As always, if anyone has questions or issues they would like to discuss, please email me.



Jeannie Jones
North West
e: jeanniejones24@aol.com

Northern region

Sorry, we don't have an update this time.

South East region

I have just qualified and what a wonderfully scary feeling it is! Congratulations to all who have just qualified too. To everyone else, just keep going – it's all worth it and you will get there in the end! As a result of qualifying, my position within the ANS is up for grabs and so, if you want to make a difference for students and you have the passion and drive to do so, then please email me. Although I have been lucky enough to have secured my first job, I'm sure I will still be active within the RCN in some capacity – it is only by getting involved that we can really make a difference.



Lynsey Newton
South East
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South West region

The South West is still in the grip of funding issues which are affecting recruitment of newly qualified nurses. As a result, many NQNs are being offered short term contracts, which is not ideal. Also, I believe the NHS needs to address why so many feel disillusioned with nursing, otherwise more nurses will leave and staff shortages will continue.

Finally, thank you for the chance to serve the ANS in the South West.

I welcome Victoria Fletcher, who will champion dyslexia in nursing and be your voice for the next two years. So goodbye fellow students – remember you are the future of nursing!



Ian Summers
South West
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West Midlands region

Congratulations! If you are reading this you are obviously already enjoying the benefits of RCN membership and know that being part of a professional body and union is more important now than ever before. Word of mouth is so valuable, so please spread the word to other students in your university.

The jobs crisis continues and many trusts are trying to accommodate newly qualified nurses in part time or short term contracts. Please contact me if you have any concerns or experiences to share.



Victoria Harper
West Midlands
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Yorkshire and the Humber region

RCN students continue to push the agenda by lobbying for fair bursaries, jobs for graduates and clear guidance for improved mentorships, as well as highlighting the impact of reduced staff numbers on supervision in practice placement.

RCN Congress is only months away, so we will have another great opportunity to get the student voice heard. We will continue to fight for your rights, but to do this we need to know what your goals and needs are – email me with the issues affecting you.

Don't miss the Yorkshire and the Humber regional conference on 5 March – book early to avoid disappointment.



David Baker
Yorkshire and the Humber
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real lives



Where are they now?

We catch up with Bethann Siviter, former Chair of the ANS and author of **The Student Nurse Handbook: a survival guide**

For me, the main impact of working with the ANS and on Council means that I now see nursing as something bigger

than just me and my own career. Seeing the struggles faced by others (students, health care assistants and nurses), being part of the work done nationally and regionally by the RCN, and seeing how the NHS and Department of Health work, have all taught me that as a nurse, I have more responsibility than just myself – we all have a responsibility to our profession.

My involvement with the RCN gave me more than insight; it also gave me a network that has helped me achieve and advance. I doubt *The Student Nurse Handbook* would ever have been written if not for my work with the ANS. I would not have had access to wonderfully supportive role models

like June Clark, Nancy Roper, Les Storey, Linda Thomas, George Castledine and Betty Kershaw.

As a nurse consultant, my role is evolving to include more strategic service re-development and clinical education, phasing out some of the direct clinical practice. This is a result of both my physical health and the skills I have developed throughout my career. As a service user, I know first hand the value of good nursing – patients need quality care and nurses must deliver.

From here, I hope to continue writing, give seminars and workshops, and to promote nursing as an art. In order to feel proud of being nurses we must develop nursing, both in our individual careers and as a profession, so that it can meet the evolving needs of patients. I want to work to make nursing theory more digestible for nurses so they can become more proficient in the art of nursing practice, and to promote nursing as the wonderful career I have found it to be.

Letters

Dear Editor,

I recently failed one of my assignments and the university is threatening to throw me off the course unless I complete and submit a new essay within the next two weeks. The problem is that, between working part-time, looking after my two kids and having more assignments to work on, I don't think I'm going to be able to complete it on time. What should I do?

Stressed student, Liverpool

Editor says

The first thing you need to do is talk to your personal tutor. Explain the situation to them and ask if it will be possible to get some extra time for this essay, or if they can negotiate extensions for another assignment to allow you to complete the one you failed. Just don't bury your head in the sand and hope it will go away! Keep a record of all of your discussions and make sure you keep to any new deadlines.



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a day in the life of...

Life



a day in the of a nursing student in prison health care

Ian Summers is the former ANS Executive member for the South West. Here he guides us through a day whilst on placement in a prison health care unit

07.30

After a 40 minute drive, I begin my working day at the prison – a formidable building with over 600 prisoners held within its huge grey stone walls. Some of my friends are or have been guests of the prison service, and I believe this has given me an understanding of how and why people can end up in prison, and has taught me to be non-judgemental and to treat everyone with respect. I collect my prison keys and then make my way to the health care unit, where I meet my mentor.

07.45

The shift starts with the handover of any health issues the prisoners may have and the health care duties for the day. There are times when prison security interrupts the work of the unit, but whatever happens, the nursing team always rises to the

challenge to make sure the prisoners receive the health care they need.

08.00

Prescribed medication allocation is administered from a hatch in health care, and names of prisoners are checked against their photo identification. I select the medication from the stock or from a prisoner's medication holder and pass it to my mentor to confirm the name and to administer the medication.

10.00

I use my general nursing skills to treat any medical problems the prisoners may have, such as giving Hepatitis B injections or ear syringing.

11.15

I administer non-prescribed medication, from headache tablets to athlete's foot powder, and my mentor observes me checking identifications and dealing with the prisoners' requests. Prisoners can be loud and demanding, and my mentor has taught me to deal with these situations by

asking the prisoner not to disrespect me. This makes the prisoners reflect on their approach to other people.

12.30

It's lunchtime, although sometimes a medical emergency over the radio can interrupt. Code Red means a blood injury and Code Blue means a prisoner has stopped breathing. If a message comes though, I grab the huge emergency bag and run to the prison wing with the nurses. Whenever the alarm is raised my heart starts to race – you just never know what you will find.

13.30

After lunch I run my own mental health clinic, supported by my mentor. This is my opportunity to assess clients who may be experiencing psychosis, depression, anxiety or who have self-harmed.

16.30

Medication arrives from the pharmacy. I put it away and make sure that prisoners have their medication ready for the next day.

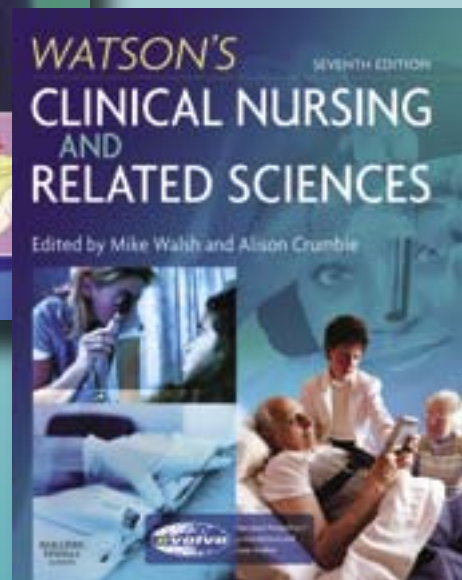
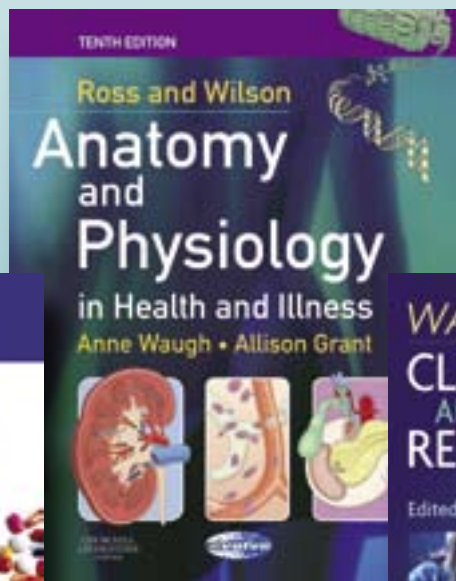
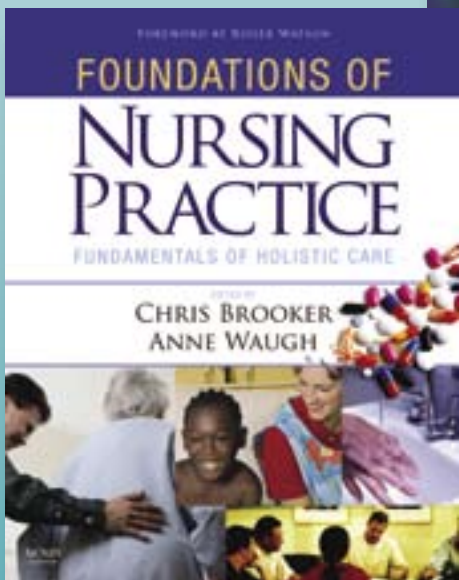
Prison nursing is a valuable and rewarding career, and involves working with some of society's most vulnerable people in prisons and other secure environments. If you are interested in this important field of nursing, you can find out more from the RCN Prison Nurses Forum. Email ann.norman@rcn.org.uk or go online at www.rcn.org.uk



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