

The quarterly magazine for RCNSTUDENTS

the answer

Spring 2008

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Healthy hearts – tips to keep your ticker in top form this Valentine's

Why you shouldn't miss Congress 2008

Become an RCN Student Information Officer

Positive thinking about HIV

**Look
after
your**

heart



Royal College
of Nursing

Your RCN, your career, your voice!

RCN Student Roadshow 2007-08

You 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. All conferences are open to all students:

- 27 February (Wales – Tŷ Maeth, King George V Drive East, Cardiff CF14 4XZ)
- 5 March (Yorkshire & the Humber – Xscape, Colorado Way, Glasshoughton, Castleford, West Yorks WF10 4TA)
- 12 March (South West – University of Plymouth, Wellington Road, Taunton TA1 5YD)
- 26 March (East Midlands – Crown Plaza Hotel, Wollaton St, Nottingham NG1 5RH)
- 9 April (West Midlands – Lyndon House 58-62 Hagley Rd, Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 8PE)

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

Welcome to the first issue of *the answer* for the New Year. I have a feeling 2008 is going to be even busier than 2007 was for the ANS and for nursing students. With a complete review of pre-registration nursing from the NMC underway, change is undoubtedly on the cards. The NMC is currently at the consultation stage of its review and I encourage you to log on to their website and give your 'two pence worth'. See page 5 for more details.

Over the winter, we have been running the Student Roadshow across the country and I hope you were able to attend your local event. There are still a few left so see the website www.rcn.org.uk/students or email your ANS Executive member for details. The Roadshow was a bit of an experiment for the ANS, replacing our previous national conference with fifteen separate regional conferences. So far the feedback is really positive and encouraging, but we always welcome more of your comments – send them into ans@rcn.org.uk

“Make sure you book early for Congress 2008”

As you will see in this issue the next big event for the ANS is Students' Day at Congress – I can already feel the excitement building! I am sure that those of you who have already been to Congress, share my enthusiasm, but for



those yet to experience the delights of the UK's largest gathering of nurses and nursing students, my advice is to book early. You can look forward to a packed day of engaging and informative student activities, topped off with the fabulous Student Ball!

In this packed issue of *the answer*, you will find articles on a number of hot topics, including infection control, how to keep your heart healthy, and HIV. You can also find out how to become an RCN Student Information Officer, which is a great way to get involved in the RCN. This is a new position that we plan to develop over the next few years to ensure all our members have a solid RCN student point of contact, but more on that later (see page 14).

As ever, your ANS Executive Committee members are here to help and listen, so feel free to contact any of us at any time. You will find details of your local representative on pages 12 and 13.

I wish you all a happy and successful 2008.

Chris Brown is consultant editor of *the answer*

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the answer

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Find out how to get more active in the RCN at www.rcn.org.uk

news

NMC to review pre-reg nursing

Ever thought there would be a better way to run nurse education or to teach clinical skills to nurses? Well now you have the chance to influence by commenting on the NMC pre-registration review.

This piece of work is examining a number of key areas including: whether the current branch programme is fit for purpose; whether it should be degree or diploma at the point of registration; whether we should be taught alongside other health care professionals; and how many hours constitute clinical skills competence.

These are all areas you may have discussed within your group or cohort, so make sure you get your ideas down on paper or online and let the NMC know what you think.

As you will be qualifying in the next two to three years, you should be aware that there is also a consultation on post-registration education underway on the Department of Health (England) website. It looks at outlines of the career pathways all continuing professional development will take and is a key document for you to have a look at as you begin your career in nursing.

You can respond individually or as a group of students and details are on the NMC website www.nmc-uk.org

This document can be found at www.dh.gov.uk/en/consultations

New student hardship bulletin

The Department of Health, NUS and the RCN have produced a bulletin looking at other financial support which may be available to NHS-funded students in England who find themselves in financial difficulties.

Details can be found on the RCN website at www.rcn.org.uk/students or on the Student Grant Unit website at www.nhsstudentsgrant.co.uk

For those students in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, most of this information still applies, but do contact the RCN Welfare Department on **0845 408 4391** if you are unsure.

Time to have your say in the National Student Survey

The fourth annual National Student Survey (NSS) has now opened. Final year full-time and fourth year part-time students are being invited to share their course experiences and second year NHS students are asked to reflect on their work placements.

The main purpose of the survey is to help prospective students decide where and what to study. Data is also shared with institutions and students' unions, to give them a clear idea of what students are thinking and what is working well and not so well.

The information has proved particularly empowering for students unions' and many have made significant impact on the experiences of their students as a result. This has ranged from securing anonymous marking to extending library hours to revamping archaic tutor system.

Eligible students will receive an email from Ipsos MORI inviting them to complete the survey online at www.thestudentsurvey.com Participants and their answers remain anonymous throughout the entire survey process.

To find out more about the work the NUS is doing on the National Student Survey, please email hannah.pudner@nus.org.uk

Get to know the Knowledge and Skills Framework!



The RCN has launched a new guide for final year nursing and midwifery students who plan to start work in the NHS upon completion of their course and graduation. It aims to help demystify some of the jargon you will hear as a new entrant to the NHS and prepare you for what is expected of you in your post.

The NHS has gone through significant changes in the last six years. One of the most significant has been the introduction of a new pay, terms and conditions system, Agenda for Change. AfC, however, is concerned with more than just pay; it also provides NHS staff with an appraisal and career development framework – the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF).

This guidance takes you through the basic aspects of the KSF and suggests some key actions for you as you begin your career in nursing.

To download your copy, go to www.rcn.org.uk/publications

News in brief

Calling all student stewards!

If you haven't already done any training as a student steward (although this role is changing – see page 14) then there is a pan-England course running on 8 and 9 March in Peterborough.

If you are interested in attending, please email gwen.vardigans@rcn.org.uk

New students' day on research

For the first time the RCN Research Conference is holding a dedicated Students' Day on Friday 11 April. Come along and hear your favourite authors, find out how to put together your research proposal and pick the brains of those who know! Pre-registered nursing students can register for just £45 for the day.

For more information, see www.rcn.org.uk/research2008

Fancy yourself as a writer?

Do you think you could write for *the answer*? We are always on the look out for news and articles.

Please email us with your ideas on: theanswer@rcn.org.uk

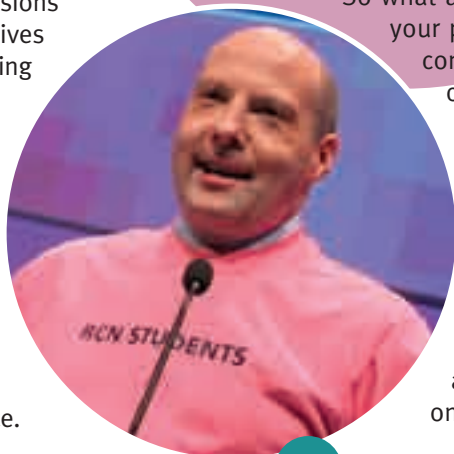
congress 2008

Why you shouldn't miss Congress 2008



Congress 2008 is fast approaching, and it promises to be another week to remember. From 27 April to 1 May, around 4,000 nurses will be congregating in Bournemouth for the UK's largest nursing exhibition and conference. Congress is your chance to network with fellow nurses and students, join in with the debates and attend one of the numerous fringe events. Coming to Congress is a great way to help your studies - you can take part in the seminar programme and find out how the RCN can help you with library services and other student-related matters

On the debating agenda this year, there are a number of items that will be of particular interest to students. These include discussions about alternatives to the continuing assessment of pre-registration students, and whether lecturers should be required to remain in clinical practice.



As well as the main business of Congress, there is a packed schedule of events to look forward to. There will be numerous fringe events and seminars covering clinical and employment issues, lectures from key speakers such as environmentalist Jonathon Porritt, and the Congress Exhibition showcasing the latest health care products and providers. The RCN has also invited a key government minister though we won't know exactly who will be attending until nearer the time.

The highlight of the week for you has to be Students' Day, which takes place on Tuesday 29 April. There will be a conference of seminars, speakers and events throughout the day, all dedicated to students and student matters.

And if that isn't enough to whet your appetite, there is always the 'Strictly Come Nursing' Student Ball to tempt you! As always there will be a free dinner and vouchers for drinks, followed by a swing band and disco - so make sure you bring your dancing shoes!

So what are you waiting for? Book your place today, by either completing the form at the end of this magazine, or visit the Congress web pages, where you can book online. The Congress site has all the information you need to plan your visit, plus you can now have your say early, and give your unofficial vote on the agenda items in our online polls.

Visit the website today at www.rcn.org.uk/congress

forward together ●●▶
RCN Congress
2008

Congress case study

Victoria Harper shares her experiences of last year's Congress:

Last April I attended my first Congress. As part of the ANS Executive Committee, I was there to work, to push the ANS agenda and put students' views forward in every debate. I had been warned that it would be a long week of days working and of evenings partying (...or should that be 'networking'?!).

In the main hall we debated and voted on the direction the RCN should take. All of the ANS Executive Committee got up to speak to Congress and keep the student voice heard.

When I had a few hours spare I took a look at the informative and fascinating exhibition, which comprised numerous stands advertising everything from working in Australia to emollients!

I found the lunchtime fringe events particularly interesting. These ranged from primary care projects in Wales to spirituality in nursing, and I was even asked to speak at the RCN Practice Education Forum's event, which was terrifying and exhilarating at the same time.

Overall the week was exhausting; I've never before survived on so little sleep! It was also exciting and really filled me with enthusiasm for nursing and our future. I made some wonderful friends and can't wait to go back this year. I hope to see lots of you there.

rcn campaign

Think **positive** about HIV

The RCN's nurse adviser in sexual health, Enrique Castro-Sanchez, talks us through the facts:

At the end of last year, the RCN launched 'Think Positive', a campaign directed at increasing awareness about the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in the UK. It also aims to provide increased support for RCN members caring for people with HIV, as treatments are developed that will prolong the lives of these patients.

Recent figures released from the Health Protection Agency show that around 73,000 people were living with HIV in the UK in 2006, a 10 per cent increase on the previous year. Once diagnosed, and if adequately treated and monitored, people with HIV have a current life expectancy which is close to the average for HIV-negative people.

'Think Positive' encourages all members of the nursing family to consider the importance of their role in tackling one of the most important public health problems currently in the UK. The responsibilities of HIV care start with the prevention of further infections, and continue with the treatment, care and support for those already living with HIV.

"HIV-positive individuals remain highly stigmatised"

Unfortunately, the success of medical treatment has not been coupled with developments in social care or the attitudes towards people living with HIV. Numerous studies tell us that HIV-positive individuals remain highly stigmatised, and, what perhaps seems worse, is that the proportion of people reporting being or feeling stigmatised by health care professionals has not decreased in the 25 years since the first cases of HIV were known.

This prejudice can range from patients being refused access to services or treatments to poor or inadequate information. It can have far-reaching implications, as, for example, patients who feel stigmatised are less likely to take their medication appropriately, which can increase their risk of illness and death. 'Think Positive' asks for all members to practice sensitively and reflect on their feelings and emotions when looking after people with HIV, seeking adequate information to feel confident when caring for them.

It may be possible for students to think that HIV is not that common, and that unless they choose to work in an HIV and sexual health clinic they will not have to look after HIV-positive individuals. However, a growing number of people are living longer thanks to current treatments; also, they are more likely to suffer from certain cancers and cardiovascular diseases and thus attend primary care services, as well as needing continued psychological support.

"The risk of occupational exposure to HIV is exceedingly low"

Also, it is known that the fear of acquiring HIV through an injury at work can deter students from being interested in working in the area or fuel the feelings of stigma. However, the risk of occupational exposure to HIV and the number of documented occupational infections is exceedingly low. 'Think Positive' encourages all students to be familiar with local procedures and national guidelines.

'Think Positive' is an awareness campaign with a global and inclusive vision for improving the attitudes and skills that members have regarding HIV, consolidating the work that the RCN has been leading in diverse areas and strengthening the role that nurses must play in preventing further infections as well as caring for those already living with HIV, with the ultimate goal of ensuring quality care for all.

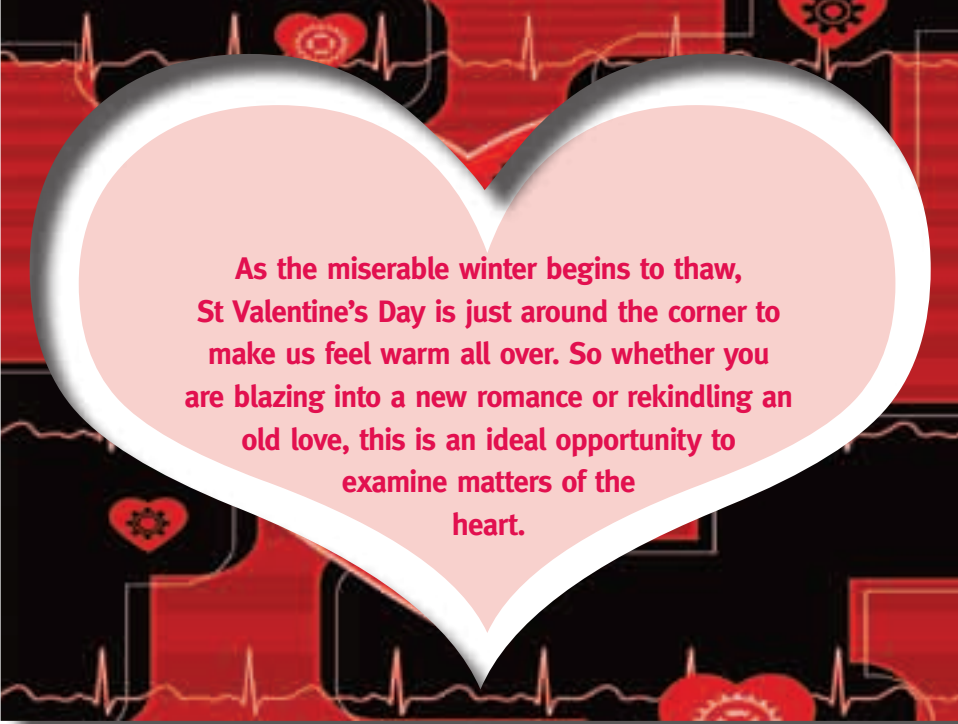
Find out more about this important campaign and access guidelines and advice at www.rcn.org.uk/thinkpositive

THINK
POSITIVE
LET'S END THE STIGMA OF HIV

health matters

Look after your heart

The answer's consultant editor Chris Brown looks at ways to keep your ticker in top form



As the miserable winter begins to thaw, St Valentine's Day is just around the corner to make us feel warm all over. So whether you are blazing into a new romance or rekindling an old love, this is an ideal opportunity to examine matters of the heart.

©Digital Art

As aspiring health care professionals, we should all have knowledge of heart disease and the lifestyle choices which have a direct impact on our health. Indeed it may be that you have a special interest in cardiac matters or have simply been involved in offering health advice to a patient. But have you thought about protecting yourself against poor health in the future?

From your first placement you may have noticed the road to nursing is paved with potential heart attacks. Poor diet, lack of exercise and high stress levels are all easy pitfalls for the nursing student. Although many of us are still young and may not be concerned about our future health, these pitfalls can easily catch us out. However by being conscious of the dangers they are easily avoidable.

Nursing will always be a stressful occupation and for many of us this is part of the appeal.

Stress is an important risk factor in developing heart disease so learning to deal with it constructively is important. This doesn't have to mean building a Zen garden at home or becoming a black belt in meditation! Setting aside time for yourself to just chill out on a regular basis can be just as effective. Going to the cinema, meeting up with friends or going to a weekly class or club are all great ways to unwind.

Students are famous (perhaps unfairly) for another way of relaxing... partying! Now it's all well and good to have a great time, but binge-drinking is reaching endemic proportions in the UK. Alcohol abuse is an easy trap for relieving tension, however binge drinking has been shown to increase the risk not only of heart disease but a plethora of other illnesses, the major one being liver disease. So please enjoy yourself responsibly!

Regular exercise can reduce your risk of heart disease by half. With busy shift patterns and one hundred better things to do, exercising can be the most difficult life change to commit to, so make it easy. Most universities offer discounted membership to sports facilities and have a host of different sports and teams available. Many provide socially-based unisex sports such as water-polo or Ultimate Frisbee. These are a great way of meeting new friends, having fun and getting fit.

Long shifts and eating on the run are also major dangers, especially whilst on placement. Packed lunches with lots of fruit and vegetables are a great way to maintain a balanced diet, and stretch your bursary a bit further. But be careful of takeaways and ready meals – they are not the healthiest foods and the cost can really mount up if you eat them all the time.

On the whole, looking after your heart is not rocket science, and most of us already know what to do, but it doesn't hurt to stop and think about it now and again. Coming up with inventive ways to improve your lifestyle can be fun it can also provide a really useful way to promote positive health to your patients.

More information about keeping your heart healthy can be found at:

The RCN Cardiovascular Nurses Network –
www.rcn.org.uk/communities

The National Heart Forum –
www.heartforum.org.uk

British Heart Foundation –
www.bhf.org.uk



making the most of your membership

Get the most out of the RCN Library

Fed up with late nights struggling with an assignment? Can't find the information you need from the university library?

Stop wasting valuable time – everything you need to complete your assignments is only a few clicks away....

The RCN library is the largest specialist nursing library and e-library in the UK and it's FREE to all RCN members.

Whatever branch of nursing you're studying your RCN membership gives you free access to:

- an e-library of databases, more than 400 e-journals and over 200 e-books
- FAST searches – lists of current references on hot topics in nursing
- enquiry service by email, phone or post – call 0845 337 3368 or email rcn.library@rcn.org.uk
- training in finding information
- postal book loans and reduced price journal photocopying.

Whether at home, university or at work, get direct access to the information you need, wherever and whenever you need it – 7 days a week, 365 days a year!



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Visit www.rcn.org.uk/library today.

Take care of your career



You may not know it, but your RCN membership entitles you to a wealth of career advice, information sources and guidance as part of the RCN Career Service.

The Career Service provides RCN student members with invaluable help and guidance to help you get a head start in your career and reach your personal and professional potential.

You can find out how to:

- prepare yourself for the world of work – taking you through the preparation process step by step, giving you advice about marketing yourself effectively
- write application forms, CVs and covering letters – helping you to tailor your CV to match the skills a potential employer is looking for
- perfect your interview skills – everything you need to know about before, during and after the interview process
- plan your career – clear guidance on setting clear career goals and finding out more about your personal values, skills and qualities.

For more information, personal guidance and advice contact the RCN Career Service now on:

Telephone: 0845 408 4391 (Lines are open Monday to Friday, 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 4pm)

Email: careerandwelfare@rcn.org.uk

lgbt issues

Vic Thomas, ANS Executive member for the East Midlands, reminds us why we shouldn't ignore LGBT History Month

Putting **LGBT** on the calendar

Is Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) History Month something you read about on a flyer before throwing it in the bin, or just another mail shot you don't pay any attention to?

Well maybe you're missing out on something that can be important to you professionally and personally. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues relate to us all as nurses of the future, and as members of a wider society.

As nursing students we must demonstrate non-judgemental practice in accordance with NMC guidelines. With our professional hats on, our own prejudices or lack of knowledge may be easy to suppress within that role. But can you do the same within your cohort? Do LGBT people on your course feel they can express their identity without experiencing stigma from colleagues?

After all the years of male nursing students stereotypically being presumed gay because of their chosen profession, maybe nursing is not as enlightened as we would wish.

I expect that your schools of nursing have various social groups that you all attend. Do you think there is the necessity for an LGBT specific group at your university or college? Do you think

there are not enough LGBT students to justify it? Or do you hope that they feel sufficiently included in university life not to need a group specific to their own way of identifying?

That is a stack of questions I know, but I think that we all on occasion believe that the LGBT community do not, or should not, experience prejudice at university or from the health care system.

Maybe we need to examine our own knowledge about this amazingly diverse group to challenge any blind spots the most enlightened of us may have.

I attended the LGBT Health Summit this summer and was amazed by the stories that LGBT NHS staff could share with LGBT service-users and the similar difficulties they had experienced.

There was a particularly strong trans presence at the summit, and a lot of informal discussions allowed health care providers and service-users to address the rather erratic care that this often misunderstood client group can undergo.

In order to maintain our professional registration we cannot plead ignorance when failing to meet an individual's

needs. Look around your lecture theatre, look around your ward and make sure that you try and understand all those you work and socialise with. That way you will be an informed, present, empathetic practitioner leading the way for nursing teams of the future.

A great resource, produced by the Department of Health in consultation with the LGBT Community, is *Reducing health inequalities for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people* (DH, 2007). It provides easy to use guidance, whether you're on a ward or in the community.



Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans History Month 2008

This February is LGBT History Month and you can find out more at www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk RCN Students is committed to supporting diversity, so if you have any comments or suggestions about LGBT matters email ans@rcn.org.uk

infection control

Infection prevention and control in the 21st Century

Rose Gallagher, the RCN's Nurse Adviser in Infection Prevention and Control, gives advice on coping with 'superbugs'

Following the publication of a Healthcare Commission report into management of *Clostridium difficile*, the importance of robust organisational management for tackling this infection has once again been highlighted.

Although outbreaks of *Clostridium difficile* (*C. difficile*) have occurred previously in hospitals (a large outbreak occurred in Manchester affecting 175 patients between November 1991 and May 1992), the emergence of previously unproblematic strains of *C. difficile* in the UK is proving challenging for staff and organisations alike.

As in 1991, the rapid implementation of simple outbreak control measures can bring about a reduction in cases of the infection by focusing on essential actions, such as isolation of affected patients and high standards of environmental hygiene.

The problematic emerging strains of *C. difficile* affecting many acute health care facilities are ideally suited to survive and be transmitted within our hospitals.

'Control of this infection depends on continuous vigilance'

Poor antibiotic stewardship combined with the use of popular broad spectrum antibiotics to treat patient infections (in hospitals and the community), together with an ageing and compromised patient population has resulted in this bacteria exploiting an ecological 'niche'.

In turn, this has led to an increase in the number of infections nationally. Ideally suited to survive in ward environments for many months as a dormant bacterial spore, control of this infection depends not only on reactive outbreak management but on continuous vigilance and proactive efforts to prevent the infection occurring.

So, what can you do?

Nurses have a pivotal role in the prevention of health care associated infections. The increase in media attention on 'superbugs' and the impact of outbreaks and subsequent infections can create the impression that infection prevention and control is all about reacting to infections when they occur, as opposed to preventing infections from occurring in the first place.

Prevention however, unlike short term control, requires ongoing consistent best practice at each and every stage of every patient's care – from hand hygiene to insertion of intravenous lines and the routine cleaning of the environment and patient equipment.

'Preventing infections is the responsibility of every member of staff'

But vigilance is key. These proactive steps need to happen in both community and secondary care sectors. Although nurses are by far the largest group of staff that provide care, preventing infections is the responsibility of every member of staff. However it often falls to nurses to



©Science Photo Library

of practice in the patient care environment. Nursing students should not feel afraid or disempowered to speak out against poor standards of care or practice, and must be actively encouraged to identify, report and follow up on incidents that affect patient safety. Having safe systems in place is robust organisational management.

The RCN is in the process of developing its long term strategy for infection prevention and control. The role and contribution of nurses will be at the heart of this as we develop and refine our policy issues to ensure our lobbying of government brings about improvements in the quality of patient care.

Learning from investigations such as those at Maidstone and Stoke Mandeville are crucial for sustaining change and challenging embedded cultures, but this requires long term effort and focus. Nurses are ideally suited to lead and sustain this process, and with RCN support will move patient safety to the forefront of everything we do.

If you have any comments or queries, please contact Rose on rose.gallagher@rcn.org.uk

council and regional roundups

Council roundup

In October, RCN members from across the UK had the chance to voice their opinions to Council and receive feedback on the current nursing climate at the Annual General Meeting. Before the AGM, newly elected members (including myself) were welcomed onto Council. We elected a new chair and deputy chair of Council, and bid a fond farewell to former Council chair Eirlys Warrington. Sandra James was elected the new Chair of Council, and Robert Sowney was re-elected as Deputy.

During the AGM, many regional members voiced their unhappiness about Council's decision to accept the Government's pay offer in England. Although this issue may not be regarded with the same importance as exam and essay deadlines, as nursing students we should hold this topic with some regard. After all, the life of a Band 5 staff nurse is not a million miles away from us, especially for third year students for whom it will become a reality in a matter of months.

If you have any queries regarding the ANS contribution to RCN Council, feel free to contact either myself or Benn who will be happy to help with any questions you may have.



Naomi Baker

RCN Council

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Benn Mott

RCN Council

e: benmott@gedben.com

Regional roundups

Northern Ireland

Hello, I'm Gillian and I'm a third year nursing student (adult branch) at the University of Ulster. I have been an ANS forum member for about a year, so I decided to step up and join Chris Brown as your other ANS Executive member. I'm really looking forward to the excitement and challenges that lie ahead! We have RCN Congress coming up, with plenty of chances to get the student voice heard once again. Our Northern Ireland forum meetings are in full swing, so if you are interested in coming along, or need any other support or advice, please do contact either Chris or me.



Gillian Larmour

Northern Ireland

e: g.larmour36@hotmail.co.uk



Chris Brown

Northern Ireland

e: cbrown24@qub.ac.uk

Scotland

A big welcome to you if you have recently joined the RCN – I hope you are enjoying your first issue of *the answer*. Welcome also to Charlotte Taylor who is working alongside me to ensure that student issues in Scotland are heard on all levels.

On 15 January, we held our first RCN Student Roadshow in Aberdeen. Thank you to Robert Gordon University for their support and for the use of their building, and thanks to all of you who attended, and the RCN staff who made it possible.

We look forward to meeting lots of you at RCN Congress this year – please contact us for more details. And don't forget you can always get in touch if you have any issues or concerns you would like to raise.



Charles Sloan

Scotland

e: csloan16@caledonian.ac.uk



Charlotte Taylor

Scotland

e: chazza150@aol.com

Wales

Like many of you, we are concerned about the lack of job opportunities for newly qualified nurses in Wales. As your ANS Executive representatives, we are constantly lobbying for better job opportunities, fairer bursaries, improved child care costs and travel expenses whilst on placement.

The Student Roadshow will be coming to Cardiff on 27 February at the RCN Wales Headquarters, and there are still a few places available. The conference is free to all RCN students, and you will hear inspiring speakers and receive guidance on CV building and interview techniques. For more info email ans@rcn.org.uk

Finally, RCN Congress is only a few months away, so if you can make it down to Bournemouth for Students' Day, we'd love to see you.



Theresa Baldwin

Wales

e: red7761@supanet.com



Sarah Evans

Wales

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East Midlands region

February is National LGBT History Month (see my article on page 10). From my local experience there does not seem to be a conspicuous LGBT presence in many student cohorts, so if you're looking for support regarding any LGBT issues experienced during your training let me know. Or better still put on an LGBT event for your cohort.

On March 26, the fabulous Student Roadshow rolls into Nottingham. We've got some great workshops, nationally-recognised speakers and a free lunch! Your university should allow you to attend as practice-based learning hours, so book your place now – email ans@rcn.org.uk



Vic Thomas

East Midlands

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regional roundups

Eastern region

Firstly, a huge thank you to all of you who turned up for the Eastern region Student Roadshow. It was great that so many of you came and took a keen interest in what the RCN can do for you.

RCN Congress is fast approaching so if you would like to go for Students' Day or for the full week, then please get in touch. Congress is a fantastic learning experience, with the largest nursing exhibition in the world, networking opportunities and a chance to make enquiries into your future career – once you go you will never miss it again!

If you have any problems or if you are interested in becoming more active in the RCN, get in touch and I can help organise your training.



Sonia Vanner

Eastern

e: soniavanner@hotmail.co.uk

London region

Hello, I am your new London ANS representative. I am a second year mental health branch diploma student. Starting my nursing training (at the age of thirty) is the best decision I have made, and I am passionate about the profession. This is a time of change for nursing students so I'm keen to hear from you and will do my best to represent your views.

I was recruited at the London Student Roadshow in October. Thanks to everyone who made it such a great day – it was inspiring and made me want to get involved. So I would definitely recommend going to Congress this year, if you're looking for inspiration.



Jennifer Luchoomun

London

e: jen_luchoomun@hotmail.com

North West region

The North West region Student Roadshow took place last month, and I hope those of you who attended enjoyed the experience.

The next event on the RCN student agenda is Congress. This is a great

opportunity to network with other nursing students from across the UK and, of course, grab bags full of freebies as we students do!

Don't forget that the Student Seminars are still being held throughout the region; contact the main Bolton office for venue details. As usual, any problems or queries, please feel free to email me.



Jeannie Jones

North West

e: jeanniejones24@aol.com

Northern region

Our Northern region roadshow was on 30 January – thank you to all of you who came! The content was full and exciting and it was a great opportunity to raise burning issues.

On a very positive note, the job situation has greatly improved in our region. The feedback has been excellent and up to 80 per cent of graduates found jobs, which is fantastic news.

This year, we will continue to support and advise you as members of the RCN. The ANS will push for change on issues that concern all of us as nursing students. I look forward to meeting you at Congress.



Saffron Brown

Northern

e: saffronbrown208@hotmail.com

South East region

Position vacant. For details about becoming the ANS representative, contact gill.robertson@rcn.org.uk

South West region

Hello, I'm your new ANS rep for the South West. I'm here to support, listen and guide on any concerns that any of you come up against. I feel passionate about equality and diversity and feel that students should be able to have a voice. I am happy to hear feedback, concerns, issues and positive stories of your experiences, so please email me.

The South West region Student Roadshow will be in Taunton on 12 March, so I look forward to meeting you there and at Congress in April. For info about either event email ans@rcn.org.uk



Vicky Fletcher

South West

e: victoria@fletcher1365.fslife.co.uk

West Midlands region

This year the ANS will be campaigning for a year of jobs for all, guaranteed preceptorship and a generous bursary!

The Student Roadshow comes to the West Midlands on 9 April at the RCN Birmingham Office. Come along to hear inspirational speakers and for advice on improving your CV, applying for jobs and interview techniques. And if that wasn't enough, Congress is only just around the corner, with Students' Day on the Tuesday. It may be possible to put on coaches to get you to and from Bournemouth, so let us know if you're interested. Email ans@rcn.org.uk for more information.



Victoria Harper

West Midlands

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Yorkshire & the Humber region

The Roadshow comes to Castleford on 5 March, and I hope to see as many of you there as possible. Details and booking can be made by emailing ans@rcn.org.uk. Also, it would be great to get lots of our region's students to Congress. Previous attendees have said how worthwhile and enjoyable they have found it.

We are a vocal (and listened to) part of the RCN, we need you to tell us what issues are important to you, both locally and nationally. Please email with any queries or suggestions – RCN Students together can make a real difference.



David Baker

Yorkshire and the Humber

e: proffles@gmx.net

get involved

Become a Student Information Officer!

As an RCN student member there are real advantages to getting more involved in the RCN's work – you will get more information, more access to specialist groups and members and, inevitably, more ready for that all-important first interview!

Now there is a new way to get more involved without having to take vast amounts of time off your studies. Why not consider becoming one of the new RCN Student Information Officers and join our network of students who share information from the RCN with their colleagues? Let your class know about student conferences, tell them where to access references from the RCN website – become the one who knows!

In return, we will ensure you have immediate access to all information affecting students. We will give you a pre-loaded memory stick with a vast range of information on it and

will keep you up to date with all new developments and useful publications. You will be the first to know about upcoming events and training days, consultations that affect nursing students and we will facilitate you in having your say. You will have a reduced subscription rate to *Nursing Standard* and there will be a specific area on the RCN website for our SIOs.

Local events and issues will also be flagged up to you and there may be the opportunity for you to represent the RCN on various meetings and committees.

We would like to see an SIO in every university, in every cohort and every class to make sure that all students get the most from their RCN membership that they can. Come and join us!

All you need to do is go to www.rcn.org.uk/students and download the application form from the 'Get Involved' section. What could be easier?



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Letters



Dear Ed,

As a second year adult student I have just received a letter telling me that I have failed an assignment twice. It also says that I will be discontinued from the course – is there anything I can do?

David

Ed says:

I am sorry you have run into such difficulty – there are three things you need to do quickly:

- go and speak to your personal tutor/lecturer and see if there is anything they can do
- find your University student handbook and check the criteria for an academic appeal
- speak to the Student Union within your University for advice on how to structure that appeal and also to get support through the process – many universities will only let their own student union into appeal hearings.

If you get stuck do contact RCN Direct on 0845 772 6100.

a day in the life of...

Life

a day in the
of a care home manager



After completing his training, student member of RCN Council Benn Mott started his first job as registered nurse manager of a mental health care home. Here he talks us through the challenges of opening a brand new care home...

Starting my new job was a great opportunity to see the link between my newly-acquired clinical skills and real practical situations; when all that training finally made sense and when I emerged as the nurse I always wanted to be.

I finished my training on a high. My involvement with the RCN had given me exposure to amazing opportunities with nurse leaders. I had been in the midst of big debates about our present and future roles and the 'what is a nurse?' conundrum. I had enthusiastically unpicked every known nursing truth and tried to understand its veracity and relevance to 21st Century nursing.

Anyway, I digress – this is supposed to be about my new job! My first job as a newly qualified mental health nurse is registered nurse manager of a brand new, purpose-built dementia care home in the North West.

My first day was on a building site, when I took an initial look around what was to be a flagship service for the council. I was told that I had 30 days to meet all the CSCI (Commission for Social Care Inspection) minimum standards, in what was ostensibly still a building under construction (see pictures).

However, as all newly qualified nurses will know, managing change according to Kurt Lewin is 'a process of unfreezing, implementing change and refreezing'.

The unfreezing part proved challenging in a partially-built building in early November! I had to show the local CSCI inspector round, hoping to persuade her to register a building in three weeks, when normally the process takes two months.

Nurse training taught me many valuable skills, and one that came into its own at this time was research – know your stuff and be able to talk confidently about it. By immersing myself in the national minimum standards, backed up by a detailed understanding of the National Service Framework for older people, I was able to show the inspector that our commitment to the people who would use our service was such that we would only contemplate opening on such a

tight time frame because we knew the service we would deliver would be exceptional.

For me the NSF suddenly made perfect sense and showed me exactly what I should be aiming for. I had the chance to devise a service from scratch and to decide what it would look like and what it would do.

It has been a challenging but amazing experience, and a great learning curve. Now, I had better dash – I have a flood in the attic above the kitchen and the fire alarm has decided to phone the fire brigade every 30 minutes, so I'll get back to you....



If you have a story to share about your student or workplace experiences, email theanswer@rcn.org.uk

