



## RCN SCOTLAND BRIEFING: DIGNITY-PROOFING CAMPAIGN

### How is RCN Scotland supporting members to place dignity at the heart of everything they do?

The RCN dignity campaign has been developed in response to growing concerns from patients and nursing staff about dignity in care.

Our campaign aims to provide leadership and support and education on this issue for our members. *Defending Dignity – challenges and opportunities for nursing*, based on findings from a survey of 2,000 nurses, forms the basis of our campaign. We are providing nurses with:

- an e-learning resource, available through the RCN Learning Zone website;
- posters setting out what patients should expect from staff working in emergency care and, conversely, what staff expect from patients in respect of dignity in care;
- a practice support pack for members leading workshops, developed in partnership with Help the Aged; *and*
- training resources to support nurses when influencing change within their organisation.

In addition, RCN Scotland is involved in a collaborative pilot project supporting improvements in delivery of dignified care with Orkney, Shetland and Grampian health boards and with care home members of *Scottish Care*. Bespoke programmes will be developed and delivered via the RCN consultancy service. The aims of this project include:

- promoting the value of nursing and creating environments in which dignified care is delivered by nurses; *and*
- providing learning resources and opportunities for nurses to enhance the care that they deliver.

### How can the Scottish Government and health boards support nurses in placing dignity at the heart of everything they do?

The Government made clear in its recently launched proposals for a *Patients' Rights Bill* (September 2008) that dignity and respect are to become key patient entitlements. It should make this a reality by introducing a dignity-proofing standard for all the decisions that the Government and health boards make that directly or indirectly impact on patient care.

Decisions in the following areas, and many others, all have the potential to impact on patient dignity:

- targets for patient care such as the four-hour emergency care target;
- workforce planning, to ensure an appropriate nurse/patient ratio and skill mix;
- workforce planning for other groups, such as healthcare support workers;
- the design of health care environments;
- provision of sufficient material resources (equipment, towels, gowns, bed linen);
- the design of gowns;
- how Healthcare Associated Infections (HAIs) incidences are managed;
- resources for palliative care plans;
- patient involvement in their own treatment; *and*
- provision of rehabilitation services.



#### How could dignity-proofing work?

The Scottish Government could adapt existing models, such as the *Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment Toolkit*, which is currently used to ensure equality and diversity issues are addressed, in the design, development and delivery of policies and services across NHSScotland. A similar approach could be developed for dignity. It would result in a checklist of potential ways in which patient dignity could be improved or compromised that would be used every time a resource or policy decision is made. Such a decision can then only be taken forward if the checklist established that dignity would be maintained at the same level or improved.

Developing such an approach must be done in partnership with nurses, patients and all other stakeholders involved in the provision of healthcare.

RCN Scotland is calling on the Scottish Government to consider ways in which it can genuinely place patient dignity at the heart of its decision-making.

#### Key facts about RCN Scotland and Nursing

RCN Scotland represents nursing students, registered nurses and healthcare support workers who work in the NHS, independent sector or voluntary sector. RCN Scotland has over 37,500 members.

Nurses are by far the biggest staff group in the NHS workforce. In wholetime equivalent terms, nurses represent 44% of the NHS workforce, with the next biggest staff group being administrative services at 19% followed by support services at 11%.

RCN Scotland represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies. The RCN is both a trade union and a professional body.



For more information:  
[www.rcn.org.uk/scotland](http://www.rcn.org.uk/scotland)



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