

The quarterly magazine for RCNSTUDENTS

the answer

Summer 2007

IN THIS ISSUE:

We report back on the highlights of Congress 2007

Election time! ANS Executive positions are up for grabs

Degree vs diploma – the debate continues...

Congress – how was it for you?



Royal College
of Nursing

Student finance survey 2007

Please help the RCN to build an accurate profile of student finances and the impact that deficits and job losses are having on students, by completing the following survey.

All answers will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Name (optional)

Email (optional)

1 Which course are you doing?

(please circle) Degree / Diploma

2 Which country are you studying in?

3 Year course commenced

4 Sex

5 Age

6 No. of dependants (i.e. children, relatives)

7 How do you finance yourself on your course? (tick all that apply)

- Means-tested bursary
- Non means-tested bursary
- Student loan
- Access fund
- NHS Hardship grant
- Part time work

8 Do you receive any of the following allowances? (tick all that apply)

- Extra weeks
- Older students
- Initial expenses
- Dependants
- Single parents
- Disabled
- Two homes
- Clinical placement costs
- Other

9 Can you estimate the level of debt you have in any of these categories?

Amount in £

- Student loan
- Bank loan
- Overdraft
- Credit card
- Loans from friends
- Other debts

10 Have you ever considered leaving your course for financial reasons?

(please circle) Yes / No

If yes, what level of debt made you consider leaving? (tick appropriate box)

- No debt
- Less than £1500
- £1500-£2999
- £3000 or more

11 How confident are you that you will get a full-time permanent post on qualifying? (tick appropriate box)

- Very confident
- Reasonably confident
- Not sure
- Not confident
- Very unconfident

12 To what extent do you agree with these statements on student funding (tick appropriate box for each)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. Nursing and midwifery students should be funded through the same system as all other students					
b. Supernumerary status is essential to the quality of the student learning experience					
c. The quality of education would be diminished if students became employees					
d. It is important for the professional status of nursing that students are not employees					
e. I am satisfied with the funding I receive for travel to clinical placements					
f. Nursing degree students should be funded in the same way as diploma students (England only)					
g. If I had a bursary of £10,000 I would not need to take part time work during my education					

Editorial

Another Congress is over and what an eventful week it was. Student issues were high on the agenda, and Students' Day was a huge success with over one thousand of you in attendance.

During the debates, an alarming number of students stood up to speak about experiences of being left in charge of patients without warning or adequate support. The effect this has on our training can be so detrimental, as time spent in practice without suitable support does not provide an adequate learning experience. I believe such incidents occur because the wards we are learning and working on are not sufficiently staffed. Despite this, many newly qualified nurses are still unemployed, with many of us expecting the same fate when we qualify.

Although it can be difficult to speak out for fear of recrimination from trusts and universities, we must continue to do so before the situation deteriorates further and more patients are placed in unnecessarily risky circumstances.

The good news is that the message is finally out there – nurses have had enough! Our new General Secretary Dr Carter gave a truly inspirational first speech, in which he spoke of 'drawing a line in the sand', a phrase that was picked up and repeated time and again by speakers throughout the week. Later members voted for Council to consider industrial action, although in the event of any decisions, patient safety will remain paramount. Yet, if pay cuts, job losses and deteriorating standards of training continue in this fashion then patients will suffer.



It was great to see many of you so enthusiastic about being active within the College and I look forward to seeing it all again next year. You can read more about what happened at Congress on page 6.

“The message is out there – nurses have had enough”

On a final note, I urge all students to get involved in local activism – the more of us who unite and stand up for what we believe, then the more likely we are to see results. Any one of you can do your bit by writing a letter to your MP, MSP or Assembly Member, attending a local forum or event or becoming a member of the ANS Executive (see page 9 for details). If we all do a bit we can achieve anything!

Chris Brown is consultant editor of *the answer*

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the answer

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To find out more about getting active in the RCN go to www.rcn.org.uk

news

LGBT Network launch

At Congress, the RCN Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Network was launched. The event highlighted diversity issues and the discrimination that is still being experienced by many people, and was a chance for delegates to come along and express their interest and support.

Matthew Harris, RCN Assistant Officer North West Region, was also present to explain what some of the different Diversity Beacon sites had been up

to and how the North West has been driving towards LGBT awareness.

The ANS has been working alongside the Network to ensure student matters have been taken into account, and we have started planning our input into this year's Pride events. A number of you enquired about establishing a student-specific 'branch' of the network, and more information can be obtained from gill.robertson@rcn.org.uk or ikightley@btinternet.com

For more information on the RCN LGBT Network, email diversity.team@rcn.org.uk

Talking politics at the ANS Executive meeting

As part of the ongoing Political Leadership Programme, the ANS Executive combined their March business meeting with work on the ANS action plan and presentations from leading figures in nursing.

Firstly, the aims and objectives of the ANS Executive action plan, which looks at the core problems facing nursing students, were redefined as follows:

- to guarantee every nurse upon completion of training a minimum of one year's paid employment at Band 5. This will include a preceptorship programme to consolidate and enhance clinical skills
- to secure a non-means tested bursary of £10,000 for all nursing and midwifery students
- to ensure that the NMC standards for mentors, practice teachers and teachers are incorporated into the core standards of the national health and social care regulatory bodies
- to lobby for UK-wide best practice guidance for health care students with dyslexia in clinical practice.

Next we identified the NMC, Department of Health and Council of Deans as key lobbying targets for these issues and we have now contacted individuals in each organisation.

The Political Leadership presentations were designed to develop our thinking around building effective coalitions, understanding the political landscape, and identifying our stakeholders and our own political development. It was extremely beneficial and highlighted that the simplest of questions can be the most powerful.

When entering the world of politics and building collaborative relationships, your own beliefs and values become paramount. There is no difference between doing the right thing for a patient (no matter how unpopular it makes you) and fighting for the professional issues facing students and nursing.



Questions & answers with the MSPs



Students speak up at RCN conference

The RCN Scotland members' conference was held earlier this year in Edinburgh. With elections just around the corner, delegates were invited to put questions forward to a panel of six politicians, and the students weren't shy about making their voices heard!

Iain Kightley posed a question on bursaries and the RCN Scotland campaign to raise bursaries to £10,000 per year. The response given was mixed, with some MSPs approving of the campaign completely and others agreeing that the amount needs to be looked at but not actually agreeing on a final figure.

The event was a great opportunity for students from across the country to get together and discuss issues that they have been facing locally and nationally.

For more information on this event, contact: ikightley@btinternet.com

news

Students influencing politics in Wales

Theresa Baldwin, an adult branch nursing student from North East Wales Institute, is in a prime position to keep student issues high on the Welsh political agenda:

“I am one of 20 students on the Wales Healthcare Student Forum, a vibrant, innovative forum, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, which includes students from all the health care professions. We discuss and propose solutions to improve the student experience, to voice students’ concerns and influence health and social policy by speaking directly to the decision-makers at the top.”

To ensure that the voice of nursing students is being heard at the top and to influence the future of nursing in Wales, contact the forum at www.nliah.wales.nhs.uk

News in brief

Charter for Change up for award!

Charter for Change, the *Nursing Standard* student campaign has been shortlisted for the Periodical Publishers Association’s editorial campaign of the year. Calling for a substantial rise in the bursary, sufficient mentorship, childcare support, full supernumerary status and basic respect for students, the ANS believes it was and is a winner. Thanks go to journalist Adele Waters for her involvement.

For more details, go to www.nursing-standard.co.uk

Money talks

We need your help! The RCN is keen to hear about your financial situation so we can build an accurate student profile and plan our future work. Please complete the form on page 2.

Or fill in the survey online at www.rcn.org.uk/students

Improved e-library now available

To better support your learning and development, the RCN has launched an enhanced electronic library service. Now you can access more than 400 full text journals and more than 200 books on nursing and health topics.

To access the information, go to www.rcn.org.uk/library

Get reading!

Over the past few months, the RCN has produced a number of valuable new publications on a variety of topics, including agency nursing, pregnancy and disability, and research ethics.

See the full list and download copies from www.rcn.org.uk/publications



MyRCN

At the RCN we’ve recently introduced a new online

service, which enables you to check and update your membership details securely at the touch of a button. Whether you’ve changed your name, your address, or finished your studies and need to let us know your new place of work, you can ensure we have your most up-to-date details by visiting MyRCN.

All you need to do to register with MyRCN is enter your membership number and create a password. MyRCN is clearly available, with a link at the top of every page on the RCN website

or you can go straight to www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn

MyRCN also allows you to join our new email service. If you opt in to this service you will start to receive your regular newsletters (such as *the answer*) electronically, as they become available. We will also let you know about all the RCN’s latest campaigns and activities – so you will always get RCN and nursing news as it happens. And, as we continue to improve our online services, you will soon be able to renew your membership online.

Make sure you don’t miss out on this new service by checking we have your up-to-date email address. Just visit www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn

Award winner returns from India



Catherine visiting a tribal family

Last year, Catherine Studd was one of four lucky recipients of the RNPFN Travel Awards, which are generously supported by Liverpool Victoria. She has just returned from Kerala, South India where she worked in a mission hospital.

Helping to care for patients with only limited means and under very different conditions from those she is used to was a humbling experience for Catherine, and she plans to return once she has qualified.

To find out more about awards & grants, visit www.rcn.org.uk/scholarshipsawards

congress 2007



HIGHLIGHTS

Iain Kightley reports back on an action-packed Congress 2007

from Harrogate

Congress is always an invigorating week, and a major opportunity for RCN members to air their views and to question their Council members.

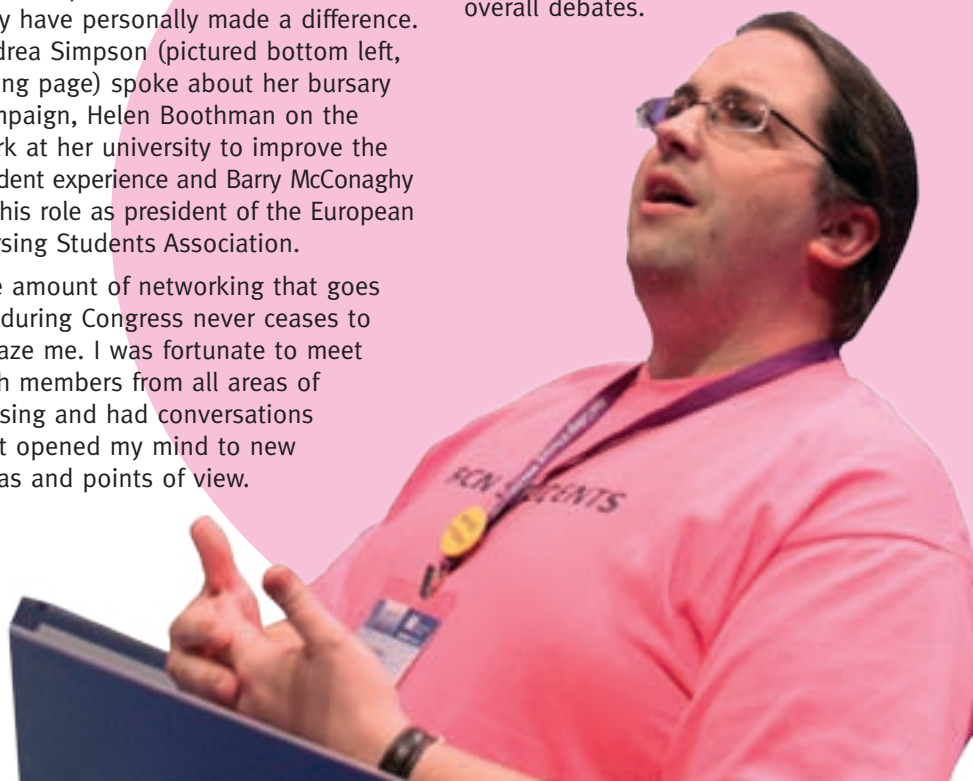
As ever, the debates were wide, varied and robust, and we had a week packed full of numerous fringe events. One of these was the strategic planning workshop which included debate around what is meant by the 'nursing family'. If the future holds for a changing workforce then the RCN needs to look at how it fulfils its support to members. We explored what members want to see in terms of the RCN's alliances with other organisations. Whilst the general feeling was not to be affiliated to the TUC, members wanted to move forward with all types of alliances, relationships and collaboration. I believe all stakeholders

in health care need to work together to ensure the best possible services are available for our patients.

The Student Assembly focused closely on the student experience and three student speakers talked about how they have personally made a difference. Andrea Simpson (pictured bottom left, facing page) spoke about her bursary campaign, Helen Boothman on the work at her university to improve the student experience and Barry McConaghy on his role as president of the European Nursing Students Association.

The amount of networking that goes on during Congress never ceases to amaze me. I was fortunate to meet with members from all areas of nursing and had conversations that opened my mind to new ideas and points of view.

During the debating sessions, a large number of delegates spoke for the first time, including many student and ANS Executive members. It was great to see students giving their perspective on Congress resolutions and adding to the overall debates.



congress 2007



So what happened in the debates?

Congress is the RCN's main debating forum, and the outcome of the debates influences the RCN's future policy and work for the year ahead. Congress heard 27 agenda items and accepted a further four emergency submissions during the week.



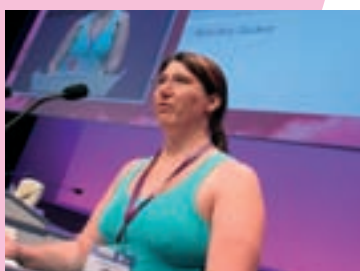
To kick the week off, RCN Lothian Branch proposed a debate for legislation ensuring appropriate staffing levels across the UK. Proposer Geoff Earl highlighted the impact low staffing levels have on patient safety and mortality. Several students spoke up about adequate mentoring and supervision whilst on placement, and some delegates questioned implementation and possible long term problems. Yet the majority of Congress agreed with the sentiment behind this resolution and, owing to problems with the voting technology, this motion was carried by a show of hands.



Delegates also heard a very passionate debate on privatising the NHS because 'it's rapidly becoming unaffordable'. The debate received a mixture of responses and opinions, and ended with a procedural motion asking for it to be referred straight to RCN Council. The vote was narrowly passed, and Council is now taking this work forward.



The emergency resolution on whether nurses should accept the staged pay award was especially exciting, and sent out a clear message that members are dissatisfied and demoralised. In a groundbreaking move, Congress voted for RCN Council to consider industrial action, and Council has since decided to ballot the membership on whether they would be prepared to support industrial action.



'Back to the future' was the emergency resolution proposed by the Welsh Board on Students' Day which examined falling numbers of pre-registration training places. Delegates heard how, over the last twelve to eighteen months, the commissioning of pre-registration training places across the UK has been reduced by 15 to 20 per cent. It is estimated that 180,000 nurses are set to retire in the next ten years, and that there will be a shortage of 14,000 nurses in the next four years. The impact this will have on the profession cannot be underestimated, and it is patient care that will suffer. The resolution was overwhelmingly carried.



Full details of Congress, including reports and webcasts of the debates, are available at www.rcn.org.uk/congress



student matters

Registering with the NMC

If you are about to complete your course and are fortunate to have a new job to go to, there is one more hurdle – registering with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).

The NMC is an organisation set up by Parliament to protect the public by ensuring that nurses and midwives provide high standards of care to their patients and clients.

A large part of the NMC's role is to maintain a register of qualified nurses, midwives and community public health nurses. So before you can practise what you have learnt over the last three years, you have to complete the registration application and send to the NMC along with payment of £43. The application form will be sent to you once the NMC has received all the necessary information from your higher education institution (HEI).

Your awarding school, college or university has to notify the NMC that you have completed all aspects of the course necessary to qualify as a nurse or a midwife, plus they must submit a declaration of good character.

The registration process can take up to three weeks after the course completion date and the much-awaited PIN number and statement of entry should arrive seven to ten days after you are registered. Note that you are eligible to practise from the date of registration not from when you receive your PIN.

For our colleagues from overseas there have been some recent changes to your registration with the NMC. All applicants to the nursing or midwifery parts of the register must complete and provide evidence of the International English Language Testing System and all overseas applicants must also register via the Overseas Nursing Programme.

For full details about registering with the NMC, go to www.nmc-uk.org

New standards for mentors

Lecturer Moira Davies outlines the latest NMC requirements

The NMC has recently published standards to support learning and assessment in practice. These include standards for mentors and practice teachers, and reinforce the importance of the support and the role of the mentor.

A mentor is now a 'mandatory requirement for pre-registration nursing and midwifery students' (NMC, 2006), and mentors are accountable to the NMC for their decision that students are fit for practice.

To practise as mentors, nurses must be registered for at least twelve months, be on the same part or sub-part of the register as the student that they are assessing, and have successfully completed an NMC approved mentor preparation programme. In addition each mentor has to be reviewed every three years to ensure they continue to meet the mentor standards.

The NMC requires pre-registration programmes to be 50 per cent practice and 50 per cent theory, so the importance of the practice placement and the role of the mentor cannot be under-estimated. The mentor is required to offer the student support and guidance, and also has the responsibility of assessing competence and should be able to defend assessment decisions made about students.

The new standards also require 'sign-off' mentors from September 2007 to make the final assessment of practice and confirm that students have met the relevant standards of proficiency leading to NMC registration.

The implementation of the new standards for mentors should help ensure the quality of support that students receive during their pre-registration programme and ultimately the safety of patients.

Reference:

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2006) *Standards to support learning and assessment in practice*, London: NMC.

ans elections

ANS Executive Committee elections 2007

Your chance to make a difference to nursing students

The ANS Executive Committee is a representative committee of nursing and midwifery students from across the UK who campaign on your behalf. The RCN is now looking for new members to join the Committee from October.

Andy Hart, Student Member of Council, gives the lowdown on what being on the Committee involves:

“Three years ago I attended my first Congress and decided to get involved with the ANS. Now, I have only four months left as a student member of the RCN Council and in that time I have learnt so much about the RCN, myself and, most importantly, nursing as a profession.

The Association of Nursing Students (ANS) comprises the RCN's 38,000 student members, all of whom are represented by the ANS Executive Committee. The Committee is made up of one representative from each of the nine England regions, two representatives each from Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, and two student members of Council, who are nationally elected.

The Executive Committee meets four times a year, plus they have a commitment to attend the Student Conference in London and to spend a week at the RCN's annual Congress. The year starts with the first strategy meeting in September which allows any new members to get involved in the decisions that will affect the coming year's work.



The current ANS Executive Committee

The student members of Council represent the student voice at the highest level of the RCN and are also trustees of the organisation.

However, it's not all about meetings, committees and work. It's also about learning new ways of thinking, working as a team and about nursing as a profession. And I have learnt that, after a long day, the best and most enjoyable time is spent with those you have shared that day with.

And it's also about the acquisition of knowledge and skills. When I qualified last year I suddenly realised how my involvement with the RCN had informed my practice and I was using skills I had learnt as a member of the RCN and the ANS in my daily job nursing patients. That is the real power of the RCN.”

To sum up being part of the ANS Executive Committee:

Is it a lot of work? **Yes**

Do you learn anything? **Yes**

Is it life changing? **Yes**

Is it fun? **Most definitely!**

We are currently seeking nominations for election to the following seats:

- Student member of RCN Council (closing date for nominations is noon on 27 June 2007)
- Scotland
- Wales*
- Northern Ireland
- East Midlands
- South West
- South East
- Northern
- London

(closing date for nominations is noon on 6 July 2007)

*Two seats available in Wales, one is for a one year term only

These positions will commence from 17 October 2007. Any applicant should be a student member of the RCN undertaking a pre-registration nursing or midwifery course leading to initial registration, with at least six months remaining from when the position commences. Applicants cannot hold office in any other UK nursing membership organisation or UK health service trade union.

For further information and a nomination form, contact Pat Stroud on telephone 020 7647 3528 or email pat.stroud@rcn.org.uk

student matters

Take care of yourself

When you're out on the town, it is always wise to think about your safety and that of your friends. Unfortunately the incidence of drink spiking and associated crime is on the increase so, whether you are celebrating the end of exams or enjoying a night out after a week of long shifts, remember the following safety advice:

- make sure someone knows where you are going and when you will be returning
- plan your journey home – don't walk alone
- try to stick with people you know and trust – agree to look out for each other
- keep an eye on your drink – drink from bottles if you can and never leave your drink unattended, even if you are going to the toilet
- don't accept a drink from anyone you don't completely trust
- if you begin to feel excessively drunk after only one or two drinks, seek help from a trusted friend or the management of the establishment. Get checked out and go to a place of safety as soon as possible
- remember that alcohol can seriously affect your judgment – try to stay alert and remove yourself from situations that you find uncomfortable.

Also it's important to keep your personal possessions away from prying fingers. Follow these guidelines and there is a good chance you'll return home with the valuables you left with:

- always keep your bag or valuables where you can see them – ideally on your lap or between your feet, and don't hang them on the back of chairs
- keep your wallet in a front pocket rather than at the back
- don't keep valuables such as mobile phones and cameras on show
- keep your keys separate from anything with your address details.

A lot of thought goes into having a good time, and a little extra consideration for your personal safety will ensure you have a good time again and again.

Being accountable

Following on from his talk at the ANS conference in March, RCN Legal Adviser Chris Cox explains more about legal accountability



The notion of legal accountability is a constant source of confusion and anxiety amongst health professionals and their employers. Yet it is relatively simple and there are just three key questions:

When am I accountable?

If, through your action or omission to act, you could

cause harm to another, then you generally owe that person a legal duty of care. This applies to all of us in civil life, for example, when driving a car on the road, you owe a legal duty to pedestrians and other road users.

To whom am I accountable?

You owe a legal duty only to anyone whose care you have some responsibility for.

Be careful here not to confuse your legal accountability and your professional accountability, such as when you become registered with the NMC. There is no legal duty to 'rescue' someone who needs medical attention. So while you may

be criticised for not helping, you cannot be sued for simply ignoring the person who collapses in Sainsbury's when you are shopping.

However, once you accept some responsibility for the care of another, then you will owe that person a legal duty.

What constitutes a breach of my legal duty?

You will be in breach of your legal duty if your actions or omissions fall below the standard of care of the ordinarily competent practitioner.

There is a standard of care, reflecting 'common practice', for every task in health care that you may be called upon to perform. If you fail to act in accordance with the appropriate standard you cannot use your inexperience or lack of knowledge to defend your actions. But this also means that, provided you have the knowledge, skills and experience to perform a particular task to the appropriate standard, there is generally nothing in law to prevent you from doing so.

As a member of the RCN, you are entitled to legal advice and support. For full details visit www.rcn.org.uk/legal

soapbox

Degree vs Diploma



Student Member of RCN Council, Andy Hart, reopens the debate

In light of the Department of Health's report on *Modernising nursing careers*, which sets out directions for frontline nurses and employers, the nursing profession may need to resurrect the debate on nursing qualifications.

Personally, I believe that there are two important issues here. The first is deciding on what level of academic achievement is required by a nurse to practise. Are more 'practically-orientated' nurses required for the profession, or those with a mixture of both academic and practical achievement?

The second issue is whether we should take academic achievement as a measure of whether or not a person can practise as a nurse. Should gaining a degree be a requirement to enter the nursing profession?

I have had many discussions with colleagues who confuse matters by quoting the old days of SEN vs SRN, and that 'a degree does not make you a better nurse'. However, I believe that the discussion should centre on the educational requirements of nurses in today's environment. And if it is deemed that the degree is a requirement then does it follow that diploma nurses are 'not as good'?

I have concerns that if nursing became a graduate-entry profession then we would lose those who do not feel confident to complete a degree course. Yet Scotland, Northern Ireland and now Wales have degree-only programmes and I am not aware that there has been a fall in the numbers applying for courses. Also, I suspect that if you choose to become a nurse then you will find a way of completing any academic programme and overcome any obstacles that confront you.

If, in the future, nursing does become degree-only, it opens up another series of questions: What happens to the existing nurses who do not hold a degree? Will the degree mean that nurses will be paid more? (This is particularly relevant in the current financial climate.) Will a degree take the nurse further away from patient care and become more of a manager of the patient's path through the health

care system? These are very pertinent questions and I am not sure all the answers are out there.

But I am certain of one thing – you are either a nurse or you are not. Nurses should not be seen as mini doctors,

and health care support workers should not be seen as mini nurses. Each person involved with patient care has a special and significant role. Each role is defined and is equally important, therefore each career should have a progression that is defined and can be facilitated through training and education.

For those who find academic work hard and feel discouraged from starting a nursing course there should be an equally rewarding career path that also benefits them financially. This may hint of a return to the old days but if it is the right thing to do for the nursing profession and for patient care then I would argue for it.

“Should gaining a degree be a requirement to enter the nursing profession?”

Have your say on this debate or on any other hot issues affecting students at www.rcn.org.uk/members/dz

council and regional roundups

Council roundup

High on the agenda for May's Council meeting was the rejection by Congress of the Government's miserly pay deal. The General Secretary has promised to arrange a meeting at the highest Government level and to contact every MP to determine their stance on the pay deal. Council has also voted to ballot the 300,000 members who work in the NHS to ask them whether they would be prepared to support a ballot for industrial action.

Work is well underway on the RCN's next strategic plan. At Congress, members of Council and RCN staff held a fringe event to find out members' opinions on the RCN's future lobbying, influencing and professional alliances.

For information about the Council meetings, the pay ballot and the strategic plan, visit the RCN website at www.rcn.org.uk



Andrew Hart

RCN Council

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Benn Mott

RCN Council

e: benmott@gedben.com

Regional roundups

Northern Ireland

Fellow colleagues – now is a challenging and difficult time to be a nursing student. So, at major events such as the Student Conference and Congress, we have been representing your views on issues from student bursaries to mentorship and preceptorship.

In the current employment climate, competition for advertised nursing posts is high, yet the number of posts is low. We will be monitoring any impact that the amalgamation of the health boards has on students and recruitment.

It will also be interesting to see what happens when the new Northern Ireland Executive gets up and running, especially with a possible review of bursaries in the pipeline.

The Northern Ireland ANS forum meets monthly in Belfast. All are welcome – please email us for details.



Chris Brown

Northern Ireland

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Ross Mawhinney

Northern Ireland

e: rmawhinneyo2@qub.ac.uk

Scotland

Nursing and midwifery student issues are as important now as they ever have been, and with the Scottish general elections out of the way, the Executive Committee members are working to ensure that your issues are heard in the right places by the right people. We are continuing to lobby for better bursaries, jobs and preceptorship.

Student stewards in Scotland are pleased to be involved in the pilot for the new training programme that we hope will be implemented across the UK. More details on this will follow once the course has been completed.

If you have any events, comments or issues that you would like us to get involved in or listen to, please drop us a line.



Iain Kightley

Scotland

e: ikightley@btinternet.com



Charles Sloan

Scotland

e: csloan16@caledonian.ac.uk

Wales

Congress is over for another year and it was great to see so many students from Wales there on Students' Day. We hope you enjoyed the seminars and assembly during the day and of course the ball in the evening! Please let us know if you have any feedback about Congress – we will be starting to plan next year's event soon.

We also need your help in collecting figures on the number of nursing students who manage to get a job, so please email us.

Finally good luck to those who are reaching the end of their course and well done!



Chris Cooper

Wales

e: can_of_bliss@hotmail.com



Iain McDonald

Wales

e: hsuoc6@bangor.ac.uk

East Midlands region

I am delighted to have been elected to represent you. I am currently in my third year at the University of Nottingham and I have represented my fellow students on a local level and on the RCN East Midlands Regional Board for the past 18 months.

Thank you to those of you who attended Congress, and I hope you all had a fabulous time! Sorry I was not able to speak to everyone, but I hope I will have the chance to meet more of you soon.

If you have any questions or wish to raise any issues, please email me and I will do my best to help.



Hannah Harwood

East Midlands

e: hannah_harwood2005@hotmail.com

regional roundups

Eastern region

Congress was an absolutely fantastic week and I have had a tremendous amount of positive feedback. We achieved a lot as a student body and certainly got ourselves heard. However, if any of you have stories on newly qualified nurses not being able to get jobs then let me know.

I am seeking new student stewards and am looking to expand our student forum, so contact me if you are interested.

If you need any information or help, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Sonia Vanner

Eastern

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London region

We had a record 70 students from London attending Congress on Students' Day.

Our new General Secretary's speech called for politicians to listen to issues on inadequate student funding. He is our hero! Along with other ANS Executive Committee members, I am working to lobby stakeholders to put in place one-year guaranteed jobs and preceptorship prior to qualifying in England.

My time as your London representative is almost over, and I urge you to consider standing for election. If you have any concerns, please email me.



Ayodele Tijani

London

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North West region

It certainly has been a hectic few months! Thank you to all of the North West students who attended the student conference and Congress. It was great that many of you also supported the National Day of Action in March, as it is important to have a student presence at these events too.

If you would like to become more involved in student issues in your area, or in becoming a student steward, please contact myself or the regional office.

Finally, please email me if you have any other questions or issues.



Jeannie Jones

North West

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Northern region

Hello, I am a first year nursing student from the University of Teesside. Like many other nursing students, I am concerned about our prospects and opportunities when I qualify.

I believe it is important that we should all take the responsibility and fight for what we believe in: honourable pay for an honourable job, guaranteed jobs for all nurses and support in practice for nursing students. I will work hard to fight for all of these now and for the future generation of nursing students.



Katrina Wilson

Northern

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South East region

Hello, I am your new ANS Executive Committee member. I am a third year adult branch nursing student. I have been a university student representative for the past two years and am very pleased to now represent RCN nursing students from the South East region.

Numerous issues were debated at Congress and hopefully will result in positive changes for students. Changes cannot happen unless we all stand up together so please get involved where you can!

Please contact me with any questions, concerns or if you want to become more active within the RCN.



Lynsey Newton

South East

e: lynseynewton@hotmail.com

South West region

Since I left school with very few reading and writing skills, I never thought I would have an opportunity to study for a degree in nursing. Twenty years later I was diagnosed with dyslexia.

With support from Plymouth University I am now studying towards a degree in mental health. As your ANS Executive Committee member, with a particular interest in dyslexia, I will be challenging for more support within placements and academic learning.



Ian Summers

South West

e: Cardiff.city.bluebird@hotmail.co.uk

West Midlands region

Hello, in April Dr Peter Carter and I had something in common – we were both attending our first RCN Congress!

I can't speak for Peter, but I had a great time meeting other nurses and students. It was good to see so many students from the West Midlands.

On a more serious note, the jobs crisis continues to affect the region as much as any other, although the trusts are trying to help with fixed term and part time contracts. If you are about to qualify and have been affected by this please get in touch so we can collate national figures.



Victoria Harper

West Midlands

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Yorkshire and the Humber region

Thanks to all of you who managed to get to Congress this year.

The important student issues of jobs and being unsupervised in practice gained much media attention. If you have any personal experiences of either issue, please get in touch.

Congress is an important time to get the student view across the RCN and into the public arena, but it's not the only time. If you have any concerns or issues affecting your university or trust please email me.



David Baker

Yorkshire and the Humber

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real lives



Where are they now?

Dave Dawes tells us how he got from ANS Chair to where he is today

In 1993 I was Chair of the ANS, when Scottish Council Member Susan Finlay and Chair of Congress Jason Warriner were on the ANS Executive.

Being involved in the ANS is a fantastic way to learn political and leadership skills which are invaluable in your later career. I went into management quite quickly after qualifying and had an interesting NHS management career.

Six years after qualifying I became one of the youngest chief executives in the NHS with a budget of £82 million (which is as much fun as it sounds!). I left that job after two years, worked at the Department of Health for a while and then

founded the European Nursing Leadership Foundation. We are a not-for-profit social enterprise that supports and develops nurses across the UK and occasionally in Europe.

A lot of my job now is helping nurses realise their full potential, both in their clinical areas and in their personal lives. There is nothing like the feeling of helping someone turn their clinical area around and making them feel that they are finally providing the kind of care they entered nursing to give.

I am still heavily involved in the RCN and have been a forum chair, a regional board member, a branch secretary and a steward. Once you get the RCN bug as a student, it is really hard to give it up.

Letters

Dear Editor,

Due to a lot of recent personal problems, I underperformed in an exam and failed. I don't feel that the university was very supportive when I asked for help, but the worst part is that now they will not let me re-sit! I don't know the reason for this decision and I may have to leave the course. My academic record has been pretty good up until now, what can I do?

A worried student, Norwich

Editor says

You need to write to your personal tutor or course leader (an email will do but make sure you keep a copy) and ask them for the reasons you are not being allowed to re-sit. You also need to make sure you are aware of the guidance on appeals within your University Student Handbook. Then contact your university NUS officer or the RCN local office for further help.



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a day in the life of...

Life

a day in the
of a paediatric nurse



Paediatric nurse Claire Alexander talks us through a typical busy day in a neonatal unit

06.00

My working day starts with a very loud alarm, when I drag my sleepy body out of bed and get myself ready for the twelve and a half hour shift ahead.

07.00

I arrive at the hospital and change into my uniform. Usually I try to get a quick cup of tea or coffee before handover, since I can never be quite sure when I'll get out of the nursery for a break.

07.30

My shift officially starts, and I get a handover for my patients. Generally, in the special care nursery I will take care of three babies. The first thing I do is visit each baby and make a list of when they are due feeds, care, medication and any other things that need doing such as naso-gastric tube or incubator changes and checking the equipment in each space. I find it a good idea to write all these things down. As anyone with children will tell you, time can run away from you if the feed takes longer or they won't settle.

Once that is organised I begin the cycle of feeding and changing the babies.

When changing each baby, I take the chance to examine them, looking out for new developments or symptoms such as jaundice, infection or thrush, which can be common in neonates.

09.00-11.00

On the ward round I have the chance to discuss the babies' progress with the medical staff and make any necessary changes to the treatment plan.

At some point in the morning I will go for a break, but this can be any time depending on when the babies in my care need to be fed and changed.

14.30

After lunch, the hustle and bustle of nursery begins. The afternoon doesn't have a rigid timetable, but it involves yet more feeds and care! It is in the afternoon that I try to spend time with parents and go over any questions they have about their baby's progress.

With new admissions I explain the equipment we use in the unit, the general plan for the baby and I begin to teach parenting skills, such as care and nappy changes (especially useful for first time parents). We also try to empower parents and teach things like naso-gastric feeding to help them feel more confident with their baby. Feeding can be a huge issue so I spend a lot of time with parents helping them to

understand positioning and technique for breast and bottle feeding. At the same time I reassure them that it can be normal for a premature baby to be slow to start with oral feeding, by explaining some basic foetal development.

17.00

I take a few minutes aside to write up the new charts for the next 24 hours, and, if necessary, reset any IV fluids and calculate fluid balance.

19.00


Time to update the care plans for the day. I take care to document all changes to the baby's care that shift, and why any changes were made. I also note any investigations, any teaching with the parents and if there is anything planned for the next day.

19.30

The night shift arrive so it's time to handover my babies. When possible, I try to hand over to the person who had them the previous night to ensure continuity of care.

19.45

My shift is over, now I go home, make a light supper and chill out for an hour or so. Then I go to bed at around ten o'clock, so I can get a good sleep before I go back and do it all again!



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whilst you're
caring for others**

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