

The quarterly magazine for RCN STUDENTS

the answer

Winter 2006

IN THIS ISSUE:

Travelogues
from RCN
award winners

New year, new challenges, new opportunities – looking at the year ahead

Soapbox – thoughts on the future of nurse education



Inspire your
wanderlust



Royal College
of Nursing

RCN STUDENTS ANNUAL CONFERENCE NURSING FOR THE FUTURE

**FRIDAY 2 MARCH 2007,
10:00–16:30 AT COWDRAY HALL,
RCN HEADQUARTERS, LONDON**

We know where nursing has come from, but where is it heading?
Are you prepared for the challenges of a changing health service?
What opportunities are there for you as a nurse of the future,
and how can you play an active role in shaping your career?

From careers and job-search advice, to discussions on the role of student nurses in the provision of health care, to developing visions of the future nurse, this conference will help student nurses to look forward and analyse, discuss and shape their career. This will be an opportunity for nursing students from across the UK to come together in a supportive and informative environment, to share experiences, learn and debate those issues that affect the nursing student community.

Talks, seminars and debating sessions will all be included in the day.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Registration is open to RCN student members only and is free of charge. Places are limited and a booking deposit of £10.00 is required to secure all places. Deposits will be refunded after the event, subject to attendance. Bookings will not be accepted without this deposit. Cancellations received one full month before the event will incur no charge. Regrettably, no booking deposit refund will be given after this date.

Completed booking forms should be returned to Lisa Heneghan, Student Administrator, Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN.

ASSISTANCE WITH TRAVEL AND/OR ACCOMMODATION COSTS

financial assistance is available up to a maximum of £100. Reimbursement of such costs will take place after the event. Further information will be provided upon registration.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact Lisa Heneghan, Student Administrator,

Tel: 020 7647 3758
Fax: 020 7647 3431
Email: lisa.heneghan@rcn.org.uk

BOOKING FORM

RCN MEMBERSHIP NUMBER*	BOOKING FEE PAYMENT:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I enclose a cheque for £10.00 to secure the booking (made payable to the Royal College of Nursing)
* This conference is open to RCN members only. If you do not know your RCN membership number please contact RCN Direct on 0845 772 6100	<input type="checkbox"/> Payment by credit/debit card: I authorise you to debit my
TITLE (MR, MS, MRS, MISS)	VISA / MASTERCARD / MAESTRO or SWITCH
SURNAME	(please circle) for the sum of £10.00
FORENAME	CARD NUMBER
PREFERRED MAILING ADDRESS	ISSUE NUMBER (SWITCH) OR START DATE
POSTCODE	EXPIRY DATE
TELEPHONE (DAYTIME)	CARDHOLDER'S NAME
EMAIL	CARDHOLDER'S BILLING ADDRESS
UNIVERSITY	CARDHOLDER'S SIGNATURE
YEAR OF STUDY	ISSUE FOR DEBATING SESSION:
INDIVIDUAL REQUIREMENTS (DIETARY, DISABILITY ETC.)	<input type="text"/>

Editorial

A warm welcome to your winter issue of *the answer* and also to all new students who have started their nursing courses this year. I am Iain McDonald, student representative for Wales and the new deputy consultant editor of *the answer*.

In August the ANS Executive Committee gathered to discuss the latest issues in nursing and nurse education, and to introduce the new members. With a fresh set of faces, everyone was eager to participate and work together to tackle hot topics such as mentorship, bursaries and pensions. The meeting heralded an optimistic new start to the year, and, with fresh ideas in the air, we began to work on building better opportunities for nursing students. If you have any ideas, comments or concerns your regional ANS Executive Committee member is always on hand. Names, faces and contact details can be found on page 6.


“Key dates in the RCN student calendar are coming up”

There are a number of key events coming up early next year, so make sure you put them in your diary now. The ANS annual conference on 2 March 2007 at the RCN Headquarters in London is your chance to debate current student issues, and RCN Congress, which is held on 15–19 April 2007 in Harrogate, is a unique opportunity to see the RCN in action and to meet nurses from across the UK. Book your places now!



In this packed issue of *the answer* we introduce you to your new ANS Executive Committee, so everyone knows who we are and what we can do for you. It also focuses on the opportunities available to you as RCN student members such as travel awards and grants, and on the future of nursing education.

And don't forget about the online Discussion Zone, an accessible, easy-to-use forum, which is a great way to network with fellow students, share best practice ideas and ask for advice. For more, turn to page 10.

Before you start reading, I would like to wish you seasonal greetings on behalf of all the ANS Executive Committee – have a very merry Christmas and a happy new year! 

Iain McDonald is deputy consultant editor of *the answer*.

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the answer	Editorial Advisory Board
Editor: Sarah Williams	Consultant Editor: Chris Brown
Production: Louise Pope	Deputy Consultant Editor: Iain McDonald
Art Director: Cliona O' Neill, Navig8	Eastern: Andy Scott Donkin
Designer: Lesley Runciman, Navig8	Northern Ireland: Rachel Foster
Published by: Royal College of Nursing 20 Cavendish Square London W1G 0RN Tel: 020 7409 3333 www.rcn.org.uk	Scotland: Iain Kightley
Email: theanswer@rcn.org.uk	West Midlands: Stuart Beddard
	RCN Student Adviser: Susan Watt
	RCN Student Administrator: Lisa Heneghan

Cover image by Wendy Stone, courtesy of the ICN

The new, improved Student Zone tells you all you need to know about your RCN membership whilst you're studying » www.rcn.org.uk/students

news

Meet the new ANS Editorial Advisory Panel...

The main role of the ANS Editorial Advisory Panel is to review and develop *the answer* and the RCN Student Zone, but it will also look at how communication amongst the RCN student membership can be improved.

The group is made up of Executive Committee members and student members who would be delighted to hear from you:

Chris Brown, Consultant Editor, *the answer*

Chris is the Executive Member for Northern Ireland and is a second year Adult Branch student at Queens University, Belfast.
Email: cbrown24@qub.ac.uk

Iain McDonald, Deputy Consultant Editor, *the answer*

Iain is the Executive Member for Wales and is a third year Adult Branch student at University of Wales, Bangor.
Email: hsu0c6@bangor.ac.uk

The answer Editorial Board Members

Andy Scott Donkin

Stuart Beddard

Rachel Foster

Iain Kightley

Andy Hart

Website leads are still to be appointed.

If you would like to contact the group, email >> ans@rcn.org.uk

Reflecting on the Party Political Conferences

A key aim of the RCN is to influence policy makers and to encourage members to lobby politicians. Two members of the ANS Executive went along to find out more at the party conferences in September.

Andy Hart: Labour Party Conference in Manchester

The chance to talk to politicians about the issues facing nursing students was not one that I was going to miss. First off I attended a TUC fringe event on NHS Together, the new campaign alliance to raise the alarm at what is happening to the NHS and to press the government for honest and open discussion about its reform agenda.

I went on to attend a number of meetings with various MPs and managed to add to the debate on jobs for newly qualified nurses.

A memorable moment for me was Patricia Hewitt describing how reforms will be changing from a target-driven, top-down approach to a bottom-up driven reform process. Unfortunately I did not have the chance to ask for a guarantee – nurses might then be included in the reform process!

I realised there is a lot more work to do to raise student poverty and lack of jobs to the top of the agenda, but with more hard work we can get closer to bringing student issues to the fore.



Mark with Council member Evelyn Nicholls at the Health Hotel

Mark Rickman: Liberal Democrats Conference in Brighton

Attending the conference was an uplifting experience, and it was good to talk to a group of MPs who believed that the NHS should be a predominantly public sector organisation. As a group of RCN members and staff, we could ask and be asked a wide range of questions. The issue of newly qualified nurses having difficulty finding work was discussed and a number of the MPs were genuinely shocked at the dire situation. I was left with a clear impression that the Liberal Democrats had a deep respect for the principles of the NHS and that they were prepared to protect it.

The most striking memory that I took away from the conference came from the Health Hotel meeting. Here a woman close to tears was saying how she, like many of her colleagues, was resigning from the learning disability service because she could no longer cope with the pressure of the cuts in service.

It came as a clear reminder that in the end all politicians can talk the talk, but what really matters is whether they enable nurses and other health care workers to provide services to people in need.



Andy and fellow RCN colleagues meet MP Keith Barron

news

Job crisis knocks student confidence



A recent snapshot RCN survey has revealed over two thirds of nursing students do not feel confident that they

will be able to find work on qualification, highlighting the impact of the current financial crisis faced by NHS trusts across the UK.

Of the 2,200 nursing students who responded, nearly 40 per cent were considering switching onto another subject, and an overwhelming majority of 87 per cent felt that the current situation will put people off wanting to become nurses in the future.

The effects of recruitment freezes also became evident in a simultaneous survey of newly qualified nurses. Three quarters are struggling to find permanent employment in the NHS with 86 per cent not confident of finding a position.

General Secretary Beverly Malone said "We know there are 180,000 nurses due to retire over the next ten years – if the new generation of nurses are finding it so tough that the majority are considering changing careers, then we clearly need to take action now. If we don't, then the long-term consequences will be extremely damaging for patient care."

To read more about the survey and to find out the latest on the RCN deficits campaign, visit » www.rcn.org.uk/deficits

If you have any questions, or would like to share your views on these issues, email » deficits@rcn.org.uk

Farewell from RCN General Secretary

After six years, Beverly Malone stands down as RCN General Secretary. She will be returning home to the US to take up the position of Chief Executive of the National League for Nursing.

Beverly says "It truly has been a pleasure working with and on behalf of nursing staff and students. Students are the future of the nursing, and I urge you to continue supporting the RCN's campaigns to ensure you have the future you deserve – with jobs to go to on qualification, a full and rewarding working life and a fitting pension. I wish you all the very best for your studies and every success as you embark on your nursing careers".

Dr Peter Carter OBE will take on the role of General Secretary in January 2007. We will have a full interview with him in the next issue.

Recognising mentors

Congratulations to Mary Jackson who won the Elsevier Mentor Award for 2006. Mary, a staff nurse in the Outpatients Department at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital NHS Trust was nominated by nursing student Louise Ingrouille for "the passion she conveys about the care of the patient".

There were many other examples of excellent practice and how mentors go above and beyond what is expected for students and the profession.

For full details or to nominate, visit » www.rcn.org.uk/education



Mary Jackson (left) is congratulated by Kimberley Leigh, Chair of the RCN Practice Education Forum

News in brief

Important: product recall

The *Oxford handbook of general and adult nursing* has been withdrawn due to potentially harmful errors in some sections. Any student member who received a copy should stop using it immediately.

For more information, call 01536 454549 or visit » www.oup.uk/nursing

Introducing your new Student Council member

Congratulations to Benn Mott who was elected RCN Student Member of Council. Currently in his second year at the University of Central Lancashire, Benn says he has the "energy, tenacity and verbal dexterity" to help push for jobs for future nurses.

Read more about Benn on page 6

Alcohol: how much is too much?



The government has launched a hard-hitting campaign on alcohol reduction.

Initially targeted at 16–24 year olds, the aim is to contribute to a long-term change in behaviour amongst key groups in relation to alcohol consumption.

Health care professionals are crucial to the success of the campaign so you can make a difference.

To find out more and to order materials, visit » www.knowyourlimits.gov.uk

Deadline extended for ANS nominations

There are still vacancies for ANS Executive Committee student representatives across the UK. This is your chance to get involved, develop new skills and make a difference.

For full details, see page 13

ans executive committee

ANS Executive

Introducing your new



Andy Hart Student
Member of Council



Benn Mott Student
Member of Council



Chris Brown
Northern Ireland



Iain Kightley
Scotland



Chris Cooper
Wales

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

The Committee comprises two student members of council, one representative from each RCN English region and two representatives from each of the other three countries: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We would like to thank all the outgoing members for their commitment over the last two years – Richard Cummins, Grant Ciccone, Victoria Clarke, Oladimeji Sa'ad, Claire Alexander, Pam Bennie and Andy Scott Donkin.

Here is your Committee for the next year...

Andy Hart, Student Member of Council

This summer I achieved my goal of qualifying as a nurse. However, the issues facing nurses and nursing students continue as before and the student executive will continue working on student debt, fair bursaries, placement issues and of course a job at the end of it all. Council is also faced with a number of challenging decisions for which I will continue to give the student perspective.

Email: andyh97@hotmail.com

Benn Mott, Student Member of Council

I am currently a Diploma in Nursing Mental Health branch student in my second year at the University of Central Lancashire. My interest in the RCN is around the importance of nurses being supported by the best possible working conditions and the voice of nursing being organised and heard when crucial decisions are made. I'm looking forward to being a member of the ANS Executive Committee because I feel I have the experience, energy and enthusiasm to represent nursing students and to tackle the difficult

issues alongside the populist.
Email: bennmott@gedben.com

Chris Brown, Northern Ireland

I am in my second year at Queens University Belfast, where I am studying for a degree in adult nursing.

I am really pleased to have been appointed to the Executive Committee having been involved with the RCN as a steward since I commenced my studies. I feel strongly that it is my obligation to provide the nursing students in Northern Ireland with an advocate on the Committee. Therefore I would appreciate any views or opinions you as students wish to share.

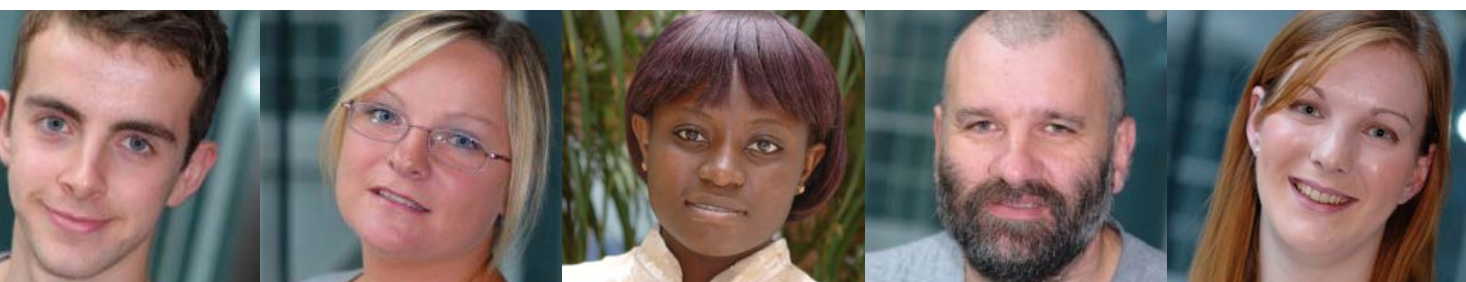
Looking forward to hearing from you all.
Email: cbrown24@qub.ac.uk

Iain Kightley, Scotland

I am a second year adult nursing student at Napier University, Edinburgh, and am half way through my adult branch.

Now in my second year of representing students on the ANS Executive Committee, I am pleased to have been elected the new vice chair of the committee and will strive to push the ANS forward in all of its priorities. In

Executive Committee



Iain McDonald
Wales

Sonia Vanner
Eastern

Ayodele Tijani
London

Mark Rickman
South West

Victoria Harper
West Midlands

Scotland, we are still looking to find active students that are willing to take on steward duties, the student board seat and the second ANS Exec seat.

Please get in touch and let me help you change the future of nursing.
Email: ikightley@btinternet.com

Chris Cooper, Wales

I have recently qualified as a nurse from the University of Wales, Bangor and have been lucky enough to find a job. As a member of the ANS Executive Committee I hope to bring the needs of nursing students as well as newly qualified nurses to the attention of the RCN.
Email: nursechris@univ.bangor.ac.uk

Iain McDonald, Wales

Just starting my third year in adult branch, I hope to use my experience to represent the students of Wales to my full ability, through the medium of the ANS committee and *the answer*.

I am working along side Chris Cooper and as a team we look forward to helping promote your needs. To raise any issues, please contact us, and we'd be more than happy to help. Thanks!
Email: hsu0c6@bangor.ac.uk

Sonia Vanner, Eastern

I am studying at HSHS in Cambridge. I am 29 years old, have two children and am in the third and final year of my course. I have been elected as your Eastern region representative for the next two years and also the representative for UK student stewards.

I feel it is important to be active and by becoming involved with the ANS I will ensure the voices of nursing students in the Eastern region are heard. It is also paramount that the needs of nursing students are brought to the attention of the RCN as we are the future of nursing.

Please contact me if you need representing in any way or need advice.
Email: brenandsonia@btinternet.com

Ayodele Tijani, London

I am studying at City University, London. Nursing issues – such as the current jobs crisis for newly qualifieds, advocating for increased bursaries, placements and mentoring – are the reason why I'm working with you and the other executive members for another year, so that they can be followed up and appropriate action can be taken.

If you have questions or concerns that you want me to raise, please email me and I will try my best to help.
Email: joytij83@yahoo.co.uk

Mark Rickman, South West

I am a third-year student studying for a Mental Health degree at Plymouth University. The ANS has an important role to play in supporting students during their training. If you have any issues that you would like me to raise please email me. The ANS has a lot to offer, especially if you become an active member. If you would like to become more involved in the ANS, I would like to hear from you. Email: mark@markrickman.wanadoo.co.uk

Victoria Harper, West Midlands

I am a first year diploma student of Adult Nursing at UCE, Birmingham. Before University I studied for A Levels and worked as a health care assistant. I have been a student steward since August 2006. I am looking forward to the challenge of helping to guide nursing education in the West Midlands for the next two years.
Email: harpervictoria@hotmail.com

There are still vacancies in the following regions:

Northern Ireland, Scotland, North West, Northern, East Midlands, South East, Yorkshire and the Humber.

See page 13 for more details or contact RCN Student Administrator Lisa Heneghan on » lisa.heneghan@rcn.org.uk

ANS strategy 2006/2007

Hot topics

for the year ahead

As your ANS Executive Committee, our role is to drive forward the issues that you, as nursing students, highlight to us. We then choose the key issues to work on over the coming year. So what are those issues?

Getting a job after qualifying

We are aware that many newly-qualified nurses are struggling to find employment. The RCN is running the *Keep nurses working, keep patients safe* campaign on NHS deficits, and your ANS representatives were present at Downing Street when the petition was delivered to No.10. The RCN has



also undertaken a survey to find out students' main issues and concerns. We are aware that deficits are also having a huge effect on mentors and on the number of placements available as budgets are cut.

We are working hard on your behalf, but please email Student Adviser Susan Watt if you or your cohort are experiencing problems (email address below).

Student finances

We know that the current bursary is completely inadequate, and many of you tell us that most of your bursary goes on child care. Over the forthcoming year, we agreed to continue to actively lobby for bursary levels above the national minimum wage level, which is about £10,000, and child care. We will continue talking to all four governments and assemblies to ensure a bursary level which is fair and equitable across the four countries. We are also updating the bursary toolkit and have been working with the Department of Health on your behalf on issues around age discrimination and maternity breaks.

RCN publications for nursing students

We have been involved in the production and updates of a number of key student publications, including:

- *Dealing with bullying and harassment: a guide for nursing students*
- *Helping students get the best from their practice placement*
- *Guidance for mentors of student nurses and midwives*

The NMC has recently consulted on the supervision of students in practice and the ANS Committee has concerns about how students will ensure their protected time. This is an issue they will be working on your behalf this year.

All publications are available to download from www.rcn.org.uk/publications

The year ahead

We will be working hard on your behalf on issues including all aspects of education, deficits, bursaries, travel payments, patient safety and ensuring jobs on qualifying. So remember these dates for your diaries:

ANS Annual Conference 2 March 2007

Cowdray Hall, RCN, 20 Cavendish Square, London, W1G 0RN

The RCN Student Conference is an annual, one-day event planned and hosted by the ANS Executive Committee. This annual event tackles the current issues that are important to student nurses and midwives. The conference has clear learning outcomes, and is a valuable addition to your studies.

RCN Congress 15-19 April 2007/

Exhibition 16-18 April 2007

Harrogate International Centre, Harrogate

Help influence policy at the RCN's main annual debating forum.



Students' day is 17 April – we look forward to meeting you there!

For booking details, visit www.rcn.org.uk/congress

We need your opinions and help to carry out all this work successfully. Log onto the Discussion Zone at www.rcn.org.uk/members/dz or email susan.watt@rcn.org.uk

soap box

The future of nurse education

Dr Rob Wondrak, Assistant Dean of School of Health and Social Care at Oxford Brookes University, shares his thoughts on the changing face of nursing.



Government reviews have indicated a major shift from acute hospital-based care to primary and community-based provision. As part of this change in policy, better information and involvement at public level is envisioned. This is in part facilitated by louder public health campaigns, perhaps evidenced recently by alcohol and obesity information via the mass media.

Nurse education is adapting to these changes, however there will be significant challenges facing education across a number of areas:

Student recruitment

Student recruitment will continue to be a major challenge. A key area for the future will be for ways in which educational support can adapt to provide new ways of responding to the changing student profile and the need to support students as cohort profiles change.

Recruitment to some areas of nursing has been struggling to sustain viable numbers nationally, for example in learning disability nursing. This will necessitate a policy review at statutory level if holds remain in place on international recruitment into pre-registration nursing programmes.

Approximately six per cent of students are from minority ethnic groups (RCN, 2004), but with a growth in the number of European workers entering the UK, and more effort in international recruitment, this will change. Thus much more will be necessary to ensure that the curriculum provides a way to address the different learning needs of both UK and international students.

With a higher proportion of mature students than five years ago, nursing courses must become more flexible in delivery, with more opportunity for entry and exit over the programme length. There is a clear challenge here, particularly for education at degree level.

EU Working Directive

As compliance will mean a reduction in the hours junior doctors are allowed to work, there may be pressure to introduce changes to the curriculum with a shift of some activity hitherto carried out by the junior doctor to the nurse.

Student poverty

There is increasing and worrying evidence of student poverty. As funding becomes a major issue for nursing education, the situation for students without external means of financial support is a concern. The nurse education curriculum must be more focused on flexibility and an ability to make changes and longer periods for students in practice.

Fitness for purpose

The content of the curriculum in its widest application must be more focussed on a central aim, so that it addresses the practice of nursing. There is growing evidence that, while students are emerging from programmes with a strong set of core nursing skills, knowledge and attitudes, they find that organisational and professional factors are effectively destroying their ability to implement change and practice effectively (Maben et al, 2006).

The true core of nursing practice remains with the relationship the nurse

has with the patient. Flexible methods of delivery must embrace the development in computer assisted and electronic learning, and the ability to recreate realistic simulations in the skills laboratory, in order to balance the potential loss of learning opportunities in the practice setting.

Funding

Nurse education is clearly affected by the impact of NHS efforts to balance overspent budgets in parts of the UK. Cutting education funding is an immediate way to achieve saving, but whatever the short term benefits of this, the longer term effects are catastrophic. The move in the mid 1980s to relocate nurse education into higher education was an attempt to disentangle it from the pressures and organisation of service demands. The aim was to ensure that the quality of the student placement experience could be better managed and, more importantly, controlled.

Traditional regulatory processes, incoherent workload planning and a fragile funding system mean that nurse education may be facing a crisis even more serious than the one reported 20 years ago. [ANS](#)

References

Maben J, Latter S, Macleod Clark J (2006) The theory practice gap: impact of professional-bureaucratic work conflict on newly qualified nurses, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 55, (4), pp.465-477.

Royal College of Nursing (2004) *The future nurse: the RCN vision*, London: RCN.

opportunities

Get talking



Have you ever had a really bad day and thought that nobody understands the pressures of being a nursing student? Do you think that sometimes it would be great just to let off some steam?

There is a gateway specifically for students but members from across the RCN can also use the facility, so you never know who you may bump into! It's a great place to chat to other students and other members whose experience may be of great use to you.

It doesn't have to be about serious issues all the time, you may just wish to share a joke, advertise your local social event or even discuss the latest goings on in Holby! It's a great place to get the gossip and you can even upload your photographs so what better place to share those (suitable!) Student Day Congress photographs with friends from across the UK? [ans](#)

Whilst many of us are comfortable buying music or researching work online, not everyone has yet realised the potential of online social networking and the benefits it can bring.

The RCN Discussion Zone provides an area for you to get together with other nursing students and discuss the day you've had. Whether you want to tell everyone about the all the wonderful new things you've learnt or just have a good moan, the Discussion Zone is your gateway to over 390,000 RCN members who will understand your excitement and frustrations. Best of all it's open 24/7 so you can get things off your chest whenever you want.

The Discussion Zone is only open to RCN members so you can have your say in a friendly and trusting environment. Perhaps there has been an issue that you have not fully understood and you felt it was a little

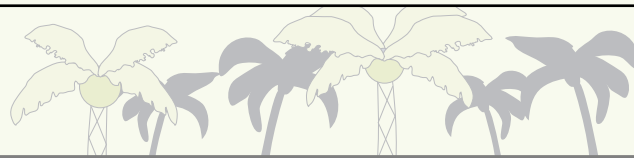
embarrassing to discuss it on a face-to-face basis? It is often easier to ask questions in an online environment. Nobody is there to judge you. The chances are if there is something that you've not quite grasped, someone else would have had the same problem in the past. Best of all, once you've discussed your concerns, there's a record on the Discussion Zone for other users to see and benefit from your experience in the future.

There is also a facility on the RCN Discussion Zone to ask questions anonymously if there is an issue you are worried about asking. The 'Employment issues and support' gateway is a helpful way to get advice from other RCN members on issues which you would feel uncomfortable discussing in public. It has been used in the past to get support on issues such as bullying and study leave. This is the only part of the Discussion Zone where you can post anonymously as elsewhere you must post in your own name.

The Discussion Zone is simple to use. But if you require help, there are online FAQs or you can contact the Moderator at discussion.zone@rcn.org.uk

Visit the Discussion Zone and tell us what you think >>
www.rcn.org.uk/members/dz

opportunities



Inspire your wanderlust!

RCN award winners report back from their overseas electives

Do you fancy taking your nursing skills abroad? Do you want to see how your nursing counterparts practise across the world? If so, you might like to find out more about RCN awards which could help you to realise your dreams.

To fire your imagination, we've caught up with some nursing students who have returned from electives in different corners of the world:

"I wanted to work in Latin America and arranged to spend ten weeks with The Luke Society health charity in a rural area of Honduras", says Rachel Pearson, one of four winners of the RCN RNPFN student nurse travel awards. "Here I saw huge challenges facing health service providers; under-developed isolated communities, very few doctors and not enough money for basics like needles and medication. But in the face of this I saw the innovation and commitment of nurses doing everything from community development to pharmacy! I worked with various projects as well as carrying out a study into the level of


sanitation and basic hygiene in the area. The information is being used in a proposal for a new project by The Luke Society. I learnt an incredible amount in the time I was there" says Rachel, "not only perfecting my technique of taking manual blood pressure but also about the practicalities of health promotion and rural health care provision. I saw how, even before qualifying, I have knowledge and expertise to share, and I realised how lucky we are to have the NHS!"

So where did other award winners go? Parul Khan went to Malaysia, Elizabeth Burchell chose Tanzania, Catherine Studd opted for India. Meanwhile Stacie Cotterill and Katy Dunn who were awarded RCN Grants had this rewarding and humbling experience in the Solomon Islands:

"We saw many illnesses and diseases, malaria being the most prevalent. We also had a heartbreaking experience, when a mother who had delivered a dead, macerated baby because of malaria died two days later from septicaemia, leaving her four year old daughter orphaned.

The malaria educator happily told us there had been no newly reported cases of malaria. We did not understand how he came to this conclusion because of the amount of people we tested that were positive. It could be because everyone on the island has either a positive malaria film or has had malaria in the past. Although there was very little we could do to prevent malaria there, we have learned the importance of proper travel advice to British travellers.

Seeing death and illness associated with malaria first hand will help us share this good travel advice. We plan to continue studying malaria and give local surgeries a copy of the leaflet we have composed to hand to travellers. This we hope will increase the use of mosquito bite prevention and the compliance of anti-malarial prophylaxis."

Have these stories awoken the travel bug inside you? If you are planning your overseas elective, look out for news of the 2007 awards on the RCN website. And don't forget that after you have qualified the RCN has more awards you can apply for. 

For full details of RCN awards, visit >> www.rcn.org.uk/scholarshipsawards

council and regional roundups

Council roundup

It has been a busy summer with the deficits campaign, party political conferences and the AGM. In addition there is the ongoing work on the PDF programme and branch review group. Today's students are tomorrow's nurses and the future structure of the RCN will determine how we interact with the largest body of nurses in the world. The decisions made by Council over the past few months, including the future of its headquarters, will also determine how services are provided for its members.

Our attendance at the party political conferences ensured that the voice of students is kept at the forefront of political

lobbying. With students unable to finish their courses and with no jobs to go to, patient care will ultimately be jeopardised, so it is imperative that government looks to a stable future workforce.

The new ANS executive met in October, but there are still spaces available to represent some areas, and I urge you to consider joining – you never know, you may become next year's Student Member of Council!



Andrew Hart
RCN Council

andrew.hart@rcn.org.uk



Benn Mott
RCN Council

gedben@aol.com

Regional roundups

Northern Ireland:

Currently, major causes for concern are the lack of action by government to bring bursaries in line with the rest of the UK, and the failure to provide support for pregnant students.

Fortunately, NI students have not had problems finding jobs on qualification but with an overhaul of the way our trusts are organised and mergers in the pipeline, those due to qualify in two years' time are beginning to expect problems.

On a positive note, three recent fresher fair events were extremely successful, with a great majority of the intakes joining the RCN.

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



Chris Brown
Northern Ireland

cbrown24@qub.ac.uk

Scotland:

Welcome to all those new members and welcome back to those continuing your studies.

I have been elected vice-chair of the committee and look forward to the challenges this will bring. For those of you that came along to our student forum meeting, it was great to catch up on all the issues that are being faced across the country. I look forward to working closely with you in the future to make sure the voices of nursing students are heard loud and clear across Scotland.

If you would like any information or on what is going on in Scotland or becoming a student rep, please drop me a line.



Iain Kightley
Scotland

ikightley@btinternet.com

Wales:

Hello all! Coming up in March is the ANS Student Conference day in London which will be looking at nursing the future. This is a great chance to hear from important speakers as well as meeting other nursing students from across the UK. Last year's conference was an enjoyable day and we encourage as many of you to attend as possible. Keep an eye out for details on the RCN website and other communications.

If you would like to contact us with questions regarding this or anything happening in your area, please send us an email.



Iain McDonald
Wales

hsu0c6@bangor.ac.uk



Chris Cooper
Wales

can_of_bliss@hotmail.com

East Midlands region:

Elections currently taking place – get your nominations in today

Eastern region:

Hello everyone. Here we are still facing employment concerns and many posts are still frozen. However, together with the RCN we can try to improve this situation by furthering the debates and actions started at Congress 2006.

Congress 2007 is in Harrogate and I hope to take lots of you up there. Congress is a must that every student should experience and I will start to get lists of names together soon. Also, don't forget our annual student conference in March 2007 – another valuable experience.

If you have any concerns that you would like to speak about, or would like more information about Congress and the conference, please email me.

regional roundups

Merry Christmas and a very happy new year!



Sonia Vanner
Eastern

brenandsonia@btinternet.com

London region:

Congratulations to those who have recently finished their courses – the hard work has paid off in the end! However, with the current pay and job situations, it is worth considering your previous placements when applying for jobs.

Good luck to those students who are preparing for exams and assessments. Remember to organise your studies around placements, take some breaks and don't tire yourself out. Also be nice to the junior students during their placements, encourage learning and explain things that they don't understand. Remember they are the future of nursing too! Until next year, Merry Christmas and best of luck with your training. Please email me if you have any problems or if you want to be an active RCN member.



Ayodele Tijani
London

joytij83@yahoo.co.uk

Northern region:

Elections currently taking place – get your nominations in today

North West region:

Elections currently taking place – get your nominations in today

South East region:

Elections currently taking place – get your nominations in today

South West region:

The deficits continue to put patients and nurses under pressure in the South West. Newly qualified nurses are also finding it difficult to obtain suitable posts. Plymouth saw a major rally against the cuts and several thousand people took part in this protest. The recent reversal of a decision to close the Primrose Breast Cancer Ward at Derriford Hospital came about after ongoing protests from patients and staff. Even when things look bad, good things can happen!



Mark Rickman
South West

mark@markrickman.wanadoo.co.uk

West Midlands region:

This is my first regional round up as ANS executive committee member; I would like to start by thanking Stuart Beddard for his commitment and enthusiasm over the last few months.

The NHS jobs crisis still affects the region as much as every other. However many students I have spoken to are optimistic.

We have welcomed many new students in the last few weeks, studying both for degrees and diplomas; I would like to extend my best wishes and good luck to them.

Please email me your concerns and ideas for the region or contact your local activist through the regional office.



Victoria Harper
West Midlands

harpervictoria@hotmail.com

Yorkshire and the Humber:

Hi everyone, and welcome to all new starters, I hope you are settling in well and enjoying your courses.

Don't forget to visit our online regional student forum via www.rcn.org.uk/yorkshireandhumber This has been set up especially for nursing students in our region and as yet has received little response. It is a great opportunity to set up discussions, debates or an information centre for each and every one of us to use.

Also our Student Conference will be at the beginning of March – those who attended last year will agree it is a fantastic learning curve and networking opportunity not to be missed.



Sarah Foulger
Yorkshire / Humber

This is Sarah's last roundup. Elections are currently taking place – get your nominations in today.

Deadline extended for ANS nominations!

Do you want to make a difference? Then get involved with the ANS Executive Committee and speak up for nursing students!

This is your opportunity to represent your fellow students on the RCN's national student group, the Association of Nursing Students. As a student representative, you will develop valuable political and leadership skills, get involved in campaigning on issues that affect student nurses, and make a real contribution to advances in nursing and the promotion of high standards of nursing practice.

There are still vacancies for ANS Executive Committee student representatives in the following regions:

East Midlands
Northern
North West
Scotland
Northern Ireland
South East
Yorkshire and the Humber

So what are you waiting for? If there is a seat available in your area – go for it!

For nomination forms contact Pat Stroud on pat.stroud@rcn.org.uk

The extended deadline for nominations is noon on Friday 12 January 2007.

health matters

Keeping fit

Following a seminar by the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE), former ANS Executive member Pamela Bennie investigates students' fitness to practise.

In addition to successes in practical and theoretical assessments, good character is also a requirement for entry on to registers of most regulatory bodies of health care professionals, such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

Heads of schools or departments have to declare that there is no reason why the student is not eligible to be placed onto such a register, which means mentors have a clear responsibility to bring any information that indicates that the student would be unsuitable to the attention of the head.

The concern is students' behaviour and what is deemed acceptable. If a student has a criminal record, is it justifiable to exclude them from professional registration? Should a student who has been reported to their HEI for unacceptable behaviour continue their pre-registration courses, knowing that they will not be given a reference of good character on completion? Does behaviour outside HEIs or clinical practice area account for inappropriate behaviour, such as fighting after an excessive alcohol intake?

The main objectives of the CHRE's student fitness to practise project is to promote professional values for students as a way of promoting students' fitness to practise. These are the principles and standards of competence, care and conduct that underpin health and social care professions.

Although students are supervised closely by qualified professionals they could still put patients at risk as a result of their abilities, attitudes or behaviour. Making students more aware of their responsibilities and accountability towards patients, the profession and regulator as well as implementing a systematic approach to student fitness to practise should further improve patient-centred practice.

The GMC requires educational providers to have specific local arrangements to consider fitness to practise and the NMC is bringing in a similar requirement for schools of nursing and midwifery.

It is now more important than ever to monitor students' fitness to practise in their chosen fields as the registering bodies strive to protect the public from health care professionals. This then may prevent recurrence of incidents such as the Harold Shipman, Beverly Arlitt and Victoria Climbié cases.

For more information, visit >> www.chre.org.uk

Letters

Dear Editor,

I have been charged £20 for occupational health charges following immunisations and blood screening tests. There was no mention that there would be a charge, but some months later we were sent letters from the university advising that we had to pay for the costs that had been billed to them.

Is there any requirement for the university to protect students whilst training with them?

A worried student, Sheffield

Ed says:

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 says that there should not be a cost to any worker where there is a requirement for Health and Safety protection.

The advice is that students at risk are considered to be 'workers' under the Act and therefore the employer or, in the case of a student, the University should cover this cost.

Please contact your local HSE office for more advice to ensure this decision is challenged, and let us know how you get on.



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a day in the life of...



Life

a day in the life of a nurse consultant

Michael Brown, Nurse Consultant at NHS Lothian and Lecturer at Napier University, gives us a snapshot of a typical day in his busy life...

08:30

Nurse consultants have close links with universities and frequently have lecturing appointments as part of their role. I start off at a team meeting with teaching and academic colleagues to discuss research proposals that were declined funding. These need to be reworked and then submitted to other possible funding bodies. I access my emails at the university and find over 75 waiting for a response – this is not unusual and it takes a huge amount of time to keep on top.

10:00

I hold a seminar session with third year RNLD branch and CPD students undertaking a new distance learning health promotion module. Some anxieties around a forthcoming assignment soon emerge – this is the first time some of the students have participated in a distance learning module so it is understandably an anxious time until they find their feet.

12:00

Off now to do some work on the NHS part of my role. Nurse consultants practice around four key areas against which their performance is judged – influencing clinical practice, promoting evidence in practice, promoting education in practice and developing practice.

I attend a clinical team meeting in a unit for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. This is a regular meeting and brings together the range of multidisciplinary professionals involved, including the GP. A number of health screening issues are discussed and actions are agreed.

13:30

I eat lunch in the car on the way to meet with my secretary, who does a wonderful job of keeping my diary and generally coordinating things and making sure they happen. We deal with my correspondence, including invitations to participate in work groups conferences, and review commitments for the next few weeks.

14:30

Next stop is a meeting with the clinical nurse specialist for cognitive behaviour therapy, who is developing a research proposal that includes people with learning disabilities who need to access CBT as part of their treatment

plan. There are a number of ethical and recruitment issues that need to be considered. We also discuss his plans to study for a research degree.

15:30

I meet with the Community Nursing Practice Development Group, who are planning a team development day and agenda which will involve all community nurses from across eight teams. The day must take account of key national and local developments and identify the responses required from the community nurses to contribute to the health improvement strategy.

16:30

Time set aside to read two research papers and a new policy document. Keeping up with this aspect of the role is challenging and requires a dedicated focus and time commitment. It can easily slip off the agenda.

17:00

Home time – after dinner I start work on my PhD, which is progressing well. I work on my thesis most nights of the week, although it would be nice to be able to do it in work hours. I email my nurse consultant colleagues across the UK about a book we are planning, and then watch the news.

All in a day's work for a nurse consultant!



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www.rcn.org.uk/studentzone

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