

RCN STUDENTS

AUTUMN/WINTER 2017



SHARING STORIES
IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH

Nursing education p6
Emergency care p8
Dealing with death p10
Prison nursing p14



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Hello

A warm welcome to this issue of *RCN Students*. There's no doubt this is a challenging time for nursing but I hope you will find stories you relate to and that inspire you, as well as an insight into some incredible work going on across the UK by students, and the RCN.



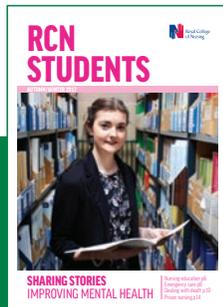
I'm proud to have been involved in the RCN's Scrap the Cap campaign – one of the biggest RCN campaigns to date. In a huge victory for the College and its members, last month Jeremy Hunt announced the 1% cap on NHS pay has been scrapped. I thank everyone involved for their dedication to the campaign. But we must remember, this is the beginning of the journey and we must make sure this does not mean more cuts to the NHS and risks to staff and patient safety.

The RCN Students Committee has been busy helping to shape the RCN's response to the NMC's consultation on its education standards. On page 6 we explore what this means for the future.

You can also read experiences of performing CPR for the first time (page 8), dealing with the death of a patient (page 10), and what it's like working in a prison (page 14). And on page 12, find out about an award-winning mental health awareness project.

Finally, voting will be open for a number of seats on the RCN Students Committee from 20 November to 18 December. Don't miss this important chance to have your say on who will represent you and raise the issues that matter. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/elections. And don't forget RCN Congress is taking place between 12 and 16 May in Belfast. It's an unmissable event and I hope to see many of you there.

Charlotte Hall
Chair, RCN Students Committee
Student member of RCN Council



Write for us

We're always on the lookout for contributions to the magazine. If you have an experience to share, why not get in touch? Your work could be read by more than 40,000 nursing students across the UK. Email studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk

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www.rcn.org.uk/direct

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Follow the RCN using [@theRCN](https://twitter.com/theRCN)

Going global

Student RCN members are encouraged to sign up for a new campaign to raise the status and profile of nursing around the world. The *Nursing Now!* campaign will seek to influence policy and decision-makers by demonstrating what nurses can achieve and advocating for specific objectives and goals. It also aims to create a grassroots movement among the global nursing workforce to generate energy, boost morale and ensure nursing is seen as an influential profession.

RCN staff member Amanda Cheesley, who's leading the College's involvement in the work, said: "This is a great opportunity to be a champion for nursing across the world. We want RCN students to be part of this social movement to increase the status of nursing and improve health outcomes worldwide."

The campaign will launch in early 2018. Visit tinyurl.com/ybuejqqr to register for updates.



Get nominating

Nominations for the RCN Student Information Officer (SIO) of the Year Awards 2018 opened on 1 November. These awards are for RCN SIOs who have made a difference at their university and shown outstanding commitment to the RCN and its members, especially student members. The shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an awards ceremony at Congress. The prize for the winner is £500, while the commendee will receive £250. Find out more at www.rcn.org.uk/sio-awards

You can now apply to be an SIO online at www.rcn.org.uk/become-a-student-information-officer

RCN elections round-up

It's been a busy and exciting time for elections to key RCN roles. Leeds University student Katharine Youngs has been elected to the new RCN Trade Union Committee to represent students and help shape the UK's future nursing workforce.

We will know who your representative on the RCN Professional Committee will be on 13 November. This committee is also new and will work towards strengthening the professional side of the RCN, developing policy and promoting best practice.

Voting will be open for a number of seats on the RCN Students Committee from 20 November to 18 December. The Students Committee represents student members all across the UK. It is expected that seats in the Eastern region, South West region and Scotland will have more than one candidate so a vote will be called. If you're in one of these regions make sure to look out for the voting email from 20 November. Find out more information on all the above at www.rcn.org.uk/elections

Best practice?

RCN Students intends to publish an article on good examples of primary care and community practice placements. We're looking for UK-wide examples. Do you have an experience to share? Email studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk

The fight for fair pay



This summer, RCN students joined thousands of nursing staff to campaign to scrap the cap on NHS pay

In a huge victory for the RCN, on 10 October, health secretary Jeremy Hunt announced in the House of Commons that the 1% pay cap had been scrapped.

Janet Davies, RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary, said: “Our members in every corner of the UK fought hard and can be proud of this achievement. The cap held pay below inflation and gave nurses year-on-year pay cuts. With a staffing crisis building, the Government is right to lift it.”

But she also warned scrapping the cap alone would not be enough. “The next pay offer must not come in below inflation and ministers cannot ask the NHS to make other cuts to pay for it – services must be given extra funding to cover the cost.”

What happens now?

The cap may be scrapped, but it will be spring 2018 before details of a pay rise are known.

The RCN will be submitting evidence to the NHS Pay Review Body – the body that makes recommendations to the UK Government on NHS pay – in December, and urging ministers to respect its independent recommendations. Members are asked to continue applying pressure on the Government by writing to and meeting their local MPs to get their support and ensure the pay award is above inflation.

Visit www.rcn.org.uk/scrapthecap

Staffing crisis

The RCN is calling for new legislation that guarantees safe and effective nurse staffing. The call comes after more than 30,000 members responded to a survey seeking to gain a snapshot of their experiences on the last shift they worked. The results, published in a new RCN report, paint a perturbing picture of staff stretched to the limit. More than half said there were fewer nursing staff on shift than planned and that care quality suffered as a result. The RCN plans to launch a safe staffing campaign next May and is encouraging student members to find out more and get involved. Visit

www.rcn.org.uk/safestaffing



Sign up for Congress

RCN Congress 2018 is taking place from Saturday 12 May to Wednesday 16 May in Belfast. It's the biggest nursing event in the RCN calendar and once you've experienced it, you'll want to keep going back. Don't miss the dedicated students programme on the Sunday and Monday. Booking opens on 5 December. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/congress



Standard practice

Tom Metcalf finds out about the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC's) recent consultation on nursing education and how it will shape the future for students

What's this all about?

In the last issue of *RCN Students*, we reported on upcoming changes to the way nursing students will be educated. Since then, the NMC has carried out a summer-long consultation on the proposed changes, to which the RCN responded.

What did the NMC seek views on?

The consultation covered three main areas:

- standards of proficiency for registered nurses – the minimum standards nurses will need to meet in order to register
- standards for education and training – the standards all education institutions, practice placement and work-based learning providers must meet in order to deliver NMC-approved education programmes
- prescribing and medicines management.

Who did the RCN involve?

The RCN sought the views of many members, including students, as part of the consultation. More than 600 took part in 18 workshops across the UK and 7,380 completed an online survey, which helped inform the response. The RCN Students Committee was also consulted.

What did the RCN say?

The RCN agreed with the NMC's view that all nurses, whatever their field of



The focus on skills is good

practice, should be able to fully assess patients. It supported the NMC's move towards standardising student nurse education, adding in its response that there is currently “unwarranted variation” in the pre-registration training of nurses in all four fields. It also called for students across the UK to be assessed in the same way, and for the NMC to double the number of hours of simulated practice from 300 to 600.

The College also welcomed changes to mentoring. It's proposed the mentor role will be split with one person responsible for supervising students' practice and another responsible for assessing it. It was felt this would address concerns around “failure to fail”, where mentors may be reluctant to fail a student they have been supervising.

But it also said there must be enough money for current nurses to train properly to support students and for it to be clear what practice supervisors and assessors will be expected to do. There should be a way to identify nurses who are keen to work with students and help them into these roles, and they should also have time set aside to specifically support students.

Read the RCN's full response to the consultation at tinyurl.com/ycamkskv and see the NMC's draft standards at tinyurl.com/y8baf9ec

A move to ensure newly registered nurses are “prescribing ready” was also welcomed, with the RCN saying this supports timely patient treatment, reduced waiting times, continuity of care and an improved patient-nurse relationship. Nurses have reported a number of benefits from prescribing, including increased skills and knowledge, greater job satisfaction, more credibility and increased patient trust.



The RCN called for updated standards for medicines management, as the NMC is proposing to withdraw its current set.

What do students think?

Rhys Mood, RCN Students Committee Member for Yorkshire & the Humber, says students are generally optimistic about the changes.

“There’s a good vibe among students around the new standards. The focus on skills is good. The NMC has looked nationally at what students are doing and realised the need for consistency across the UK. It can be frustrating if some universities teach skills that others don’t. The public perception is that nurses have a standardised education, but that isn’t the case at the moment and it’s good the new standards are seeking to address it.”

Rhys particularly welcomes the inclusion of simulation and prescribing, but says the NMC needs to provide more detail on what “prescribing ready” means and how it will fit in. He also reinforces the need to give current nurses the necessary training.



There’s a good
vibe among
students

So is the RCN broadly supportive of the changes?

Yes. Anne Corrin, Head of Professional Learning and Development at the RCN, says: “The standards have the potential to ensure nurse education responds to the population’s changing health needs and support nurses to continue to provide high standards of care in the future.

“However, we also note the importance of investing in the current nursing workforce to make sure these new standards can be fully implemented in practice. We’re looking forward to working with the NMC to develop them further and ensure there is a smooth implementation.”

What happens next?

The NMC says it is using the feedback from the consultation to refine the standards, and that it will report back and ask its Council to approve the new standards in spring 2018. Universities are expected to adopt the standards from September 2019.

Keep calm and carry on

Andrew Haydon reflects on how he faced his fears to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for the first time

Getting a placement in A&E was a dream come true but I still felt anxious, particularly about performing CPR. We've all practised on a dummy and made its chest click, but what was it going to be like in comparison to the real thing? Would I remember how to do it? Would I be able to do it? Would I just be in the way?

It didn't take long to find out. On just the second day of my placement, the red phone rang. A patient who'd arrested was on his way in and I was told to join the team. An overwhelming sense of fear and excitement rushed through my body as I contemplated the enormity of the situation.

I was stood next to another equally anxious student – she was on the first day of her placement. But I knew it was time to face my fears. When the consultant asked if I could do compressions I said “yes”. But the blue gloves on my hands were filling with sweat, my heart thumped in my chest and my stomach churned as I tried to remember my training. It hit me that I was fully involved in this team.

Initially it was like watching a film or a TV programme, but as the doors flew open, reality kicked in. The patient was transferred to the bed and he had a Lucas machine (which does the chest compressions for you) strapped to his chest. However, due to the patient's individual circumstances the decision to stop was made shortly after he arrived.

Even though I hadn't done much, it really felt like I had. I felt emotionally drained. We had a debrief with other team members, including the nurse in



“
I knew it was time
to face my fears

charge, who explained the whole process to us and how advanced life support was different to basic life support. It was a good opportunity to reflect and while it was awful to see my first death, if I'm honest I was probably slightly relieved that I hadn't had to do CPR.

Organised mayhem

Just a week later another patient who'd had a cardiac arrest came in. All the same emotions and feelings came back. This time I was asked to scribe and keep a time-check. I knew this was a really important job. A fireman was performing chest compressions on the patient when he arrived, in what I can only describe as organised mayhem in the most subdued controlled environment.



I was shouting out every two minutes so they could perform a pulse check and administer drugs. Then suddenly I was asked to help. Without even a thought, I had my hands on the patient's chest and I was performing chest compressions. It felt so different to that dummy we had practised on, but I had remembered. I was fully involved trying to save this man's life.

I continued rotating chest compressions with other nurses and doctors and helping to scribe when I could. Eventually, the man had a pulse and was transferred out of the department.

Unfortunately the patient died later that day, but I'd been part of a team trying to save his life. Doctors gave me feedback throughout the situation which gave me the confidence I needed to know I was doing the right thing. I wasn't just a student, I was an active member of that team.

Andrew is a nursing student at the University of West London. He is also an RCN student information officer (SIO).

The RCN says...

Suman Shrestha, RCN Lead for Emergency Care, says it's completely normal to feel anxious when you're facing a new situation, especially one as intense and potentially life-altering as CPR. "But remember to stay calm, remember what you've been taught and don't be afraid to ask for help if you're not sure what to do. It's also helpful to attend the debrief following the event to reflect how the situation was for everyone concerned."

Andrew's top tips

- Take time to reflect.
- Remember you're part of a team.
- Grab the chance to get involved in any situation you can.
- Believe in your own abilities.



Andrew Haydon

Dealing with death

Nursing student Chloe Taylor writes about the first time she experienced the death of a patient

We are taught in university about observations and escalation, maintaining dignity and respect and the importance of hygiene – and so much more – so I didn't feel completely unprepared for my first placement in a hospital, but I was very nervous.

We're also taught about end of life care and death but it never really sinks in that you're going to be with someone in the last moments of their life until the first time it happens. Lectures just can't teach you that. How are you going to feel? And how will you deal with it?

When I first experienced this I was on an orthopaedic rehabilitation ward and had been working in the same bay for around four weeks. I knew all my patients, I knew their families, friends, hobbies and even quirks. A week prior to the experience I was told during handover that one of the patients was now in the last few days of their life. During the week the patient grew weaker and weaker and the reality of the situation hit me.

I just wanted to give the patient a cuddle and tell her everything was going to be OK. At the end of the week a health care assistant (HCA) went in to check the patient's observations but forgot a piece of equipment so she had to leave the room to retrieve it. By the time the HCA had done this – approximately three minutes – the patient had passed away.

Immediately I felt the urge to cry. I had spent so much of my time with this patient over the last few days. I was shocked the time had finally come, quicker than I had expected, but also



The reality of the situation hit me

slightly relieved my patient was out of pain.

I approached the nurse in charge and asked if it was OK if I performed last offices (preparing the body for the mortuary) with another member of staff. I almost felt as if I owed it to my patient after I had spent so much time with them.

Before last offices I had to take myself to the staff room because it hit me hard what I was about to do. I cried a little, and I think this is alright. It means you cared for your patient, and you were successful with that professional relationship lecturers talk about.

Maintaining dignity

Walking into the room I was slightly confused to find the HCA talking to the patient as if it was a normal day, but quickly realised it was somewhat comforting. Throughout, we maintained the patient's dignity by covering parts of the body that weren't being cleaned.

Visit rcnendoflife.org.uk to access the RCN resource *The Fundamentals of Nursing Care at the End of Life*



Chloe Taylor



After washing the patient, their jewellery had to be removed and noted down ready to be sent with them to the mortuary. After all checks were done we had to put a label onto the left wrist and wrap the patient in a sheet – for me this was one of the hardest things to do.

Once the patient was ready, all curtains were closed in the main ward so when the porters came to collect the patient the other people on the ward wouldn't see anything. Throughout this experience I felt honoured to be with the patient. Lectures just don't teach you that. My advice is to remember these three things:

- always treat your patient with dignity and respect

The RCN offers a free confidential counselling service for members. Call 0345 772 6100 to enquire about an appointment.

- it's OK to cry (whether in a staff room, on the way home or even at home)
- everyone deals with this process differently.

And finally, remember that if you find this part of your training distressing you can always report to your mentor, lecturers and link lecturers for support.

If you have time to sit with a patient in the last moments of their life I highly recommend doing so – providing they don't already have family with them.

I felt like in the absence of being able to do anything else for the person to get better, I could still be there to comfort them, hold their hand and talk to them.

Student success for mental health

Zoe Butler created an award-winning mental health awareness project while studying for her degree. Susan Embley reports



Zoe Butler pictured by John Houlihan

Newly registered nurse Zoe has just started her first job in orthopaedics and trauma care. But before her nursing career began, she was already helping others through her love of creative writing.

Earlier this year, Zoe won the student category in the annual RCNi Nurse Awards for her work developing the Hot Potato project, a DVD-tool used in schools in north west England to help young people talk more openly about mental health issues.

“It was so bizarre to win the award,” she says. “I really felt proud of my project, but I wasn’t expecting to win at all. It was lovely to come back and share

the win with the young people who’d helped create the project as it helped them change their lives,” she adds.

Coping with tragedy

The idea for the project started after a tragedy happened at the local theatre Zoe was volunteering at. She was helping young people to create and develop theatre performances, but while preparing for a show, one member of the group took her own life.

“The shock and devastation within the group and local community emphasised to me that young people have a total disconnect with mental health,” says Zoe. “They felt unable to discuss their

feelings with both friends and health professionals, and weren't confident in maintaining their own mental wellbeing. I felt passionately about making them feel more comfortable talking about mental health and reducing the stigma of discussing depression and anxiety."

Around the same time, Zoe was working with a group of young people accessing mental health services. "I was using writing workshops with the group, allowing them to deal with their emotions and depressive thoughts. In comparison to the theatre group, these young people felt extremely misunderstood by their peers and society with regards to their mental health issues, while the theatre group wanted to better understand mental health and wellbeing. For me it was a lightbulb moment – one group wanted to share their stories and the other wanted to better understand."

Challenging stigma

What came about from this was the combination of the groups, to allow all the young people to explore what it means to keep mentally healthy, how to challenge the stigma of mental health,



The personal accounts used in the DVD gave them a voice

identifying signs of mental illness and how to access help when required. With funding and help from many individuals and organisations, the Hot Potato project began.

The project is the stories of the young people filmed as separate monologues. "The personal accounts used in the DVD gave them a voice and helped them to develop their understanding of mental health allowing for better confidence in accessing help at the earliest stage," says Zoe.

The project has been supported by local MP Tim Farron, Cumbria County Council and The Sir John Fisher Foundation, a charitable trust, which enabled the DVD to be sent out to schools all over Cumbria. The DVD is now used within classrooms and also on a one-to-one basis as part of health promotion in schools to get young people talking about mental health.

"My dream is that the Hot Potato project becomes a national programme used in schools all over the UK and encourages young people to open up and not feel alone when dealing with mental health and wellbeing," adds Zoe.

RCNi Nurse Awards 2018

Have you got a project or have you been involved in something within your workplace that you want to shout about? Why not enter the Andrew Parker Student Nurse Award, as Zoe did, and be in with a chance of attending the prestigious awards ceremony in London.

This award is for student nurses who can demonstrate that their nursing practice, perceptions or interactions with patients changed as a result of an incident or experience during training. Nominations for this award are not accepted and students must submit the entry themselves.

The deadline for entries is **Friday 9 February 2018**. For more information visit www.rcni.com/nurse-awards/about

Doing your time

RCN Students finds out about the challenges and rewards of a placement in a Category A female prison

'We're not there to judge'

Charlotte Hall, Students Committee Chair and Student Member of RCN Council, undertook a seven-week prison placement and now works as an HCA there. Charlotte will continue as a bank nurse once registered

Naturally I was a bit nervous on my first day. There are so many gates and it's strange knowing you can't go anywhere without a key. It can be claustrophobic but you just have to adapt to the environment.

There's no denying that at times a prison can be a challenging place – it's often noisy and the emotional aspect can be tough to deal with. Bullying does go on and there are a lot of raw emotions flying about which can be devastating to witness. I also found it quite heartbreaking when I realised what a lot of lost potential there is due to lack of funding in this area.

Sometimes people can't understand why I'd want to work in a prison and care for people who have committed a crime, but it is my job. A lot of patients have had very difficult lives and no matter what they have done on the outside they deserve to be treated.

Some of the prisoners I encountered feel like they have no reason to live and it's so rewarding if you can help them on their track to rehabilitation or help change their minds about the future by giving them good care. As a member of the nursing team you've played a part in their recovery and that's a great feeling. My placement was a good chance for me to find out if I liked the



It can be
claustrophobic

environment with a bit of a safety net around me. Overall it was an incredibly rewarding experience.

'They see us as a safe haven'

David Read, due to become a registered nurse in January, works as an HCA in a prison following a successful placement

You've got to leave your judgements at the door but that's true of any area of nursing you work in. Prisoners are some of the most vulnerable members of society and we're there to care for them. You usually get to spend more time with individuals working in a prison than you would in some other environments and inmates really appreciate this time. A lot of them see nursing staff as a safe haven.

I had some nice feedback the other day from a prisoner who'd had a privileged



It was an
incredibly
rewarding
experience

upbringing but got caught up in heroin addiction and the crime that often comes with it. She told me it was the first time in a long while she felt she had been listened to and could trust someone. I love knowing I have helped.

My tips for getting the most out of a placement in a prison are:

1. go in with an open mind
2. don't be put off by the long process to get into the prison – it's there for your safety
3. do your research. Always look around first to work out if it's something you want to do
4. get to know your team – they will be a great source of support
5. don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.



Ann Norman, RCN
Professional Lead for
Criminal Justice, says

“Students need to be resilient and have confidence to work in this area as it can be quite challenging professionally. Cuts to prison staff are making delivery of care more difficult and it's an ongoing challenge. If you want to secure a placement in a prison it's important to have a discussion with your university first to see what's possible. You can also contact the local prison health care team directly. Ask for a visit to meet the lead nurse and if no placements are evident it's best to explore this with the lead nurse and the university together. It can be beneficial to get some more 'mainstream' clinical experience after registering but the right attitude to caring for those in a secure setting, as well as confidence and resilience, is vital.”

Join the RCN Nursing in Justice and Forensic Health Forum at www.rcn.org.uk/forums

Did you know?

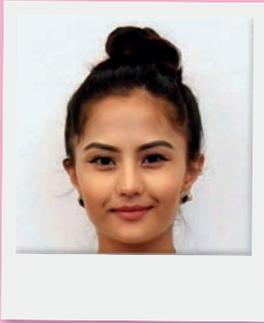
The prison population is at an all-time high and could exceed 90,000 in five years. Category A prisons hold individuals whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public or national security.

Download the RCN publication *Supporting Nursing Staff Caring for Patients in Places of Detention* from www.rcn.org.uk/publications

Behind the scenes...

The first ever students to do a placement at RCN headquarters talk to Leah Williams about the experience

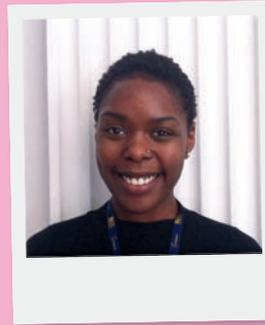
Nazifa Miah



“I decided to do my elective placement at the RCN because I wanted to do something completely different and non-clinical to broaden my experience. As a student, I’ve never had the occasion to think about the

practicalities of being a registered nurse, such as pay issues, pensions, my rights, or how I might need to protect myself. It really opened my eyes to all of this and how important it is to be a part of the organisation.”

Jannat Kasule



“I’ve been a member of the RCN since I signed up at the fresher’s fair but didn’t really know anything about the organisation other than that it’s a union. Learning about the steward roles was the

most interesting thing for me. I really like the idea of having a diverse career where I can develop as a clinical nurse but also have a different side to my job involved in nursing issues.”

Eight things you really should know about what the RCN provides

- 1 One-to-one careers coaching and online careers resources www.rcn.org.uk/careers
- 2 Funding, benefits, housing and budgeting advice www.rcn.org.uk/student-money-guide
- 3 Accredited counselling service www.rcn.org.uk/get-help
- 4 35 professional forums www.rcn.org.uk/forums
- 5 Peer support group and immigration advice www.rcn.org.uk/get-help
- 6 The largest legal team of any union in the UK www.rcn.org.uk/get-help
- 7 A UK-wide programme of professional conferences and events www.rcn.org.uk/events
- 8 The opportunity to become an RCN student information officer (SIO) or to stand for election to the RCN Students Committee www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved-student



I wanted to do something completely different

The RCN is currently looking at expanding the elective placement programme for next year. Keep an eye out for further information.

Eight things you (probably) didn't know about the RCN

- 1 The RCN celebrated its centenary last year and there have been moments of Hollywood glitz and glamour along the way. In 1950, the RCN put on a premiere of the Florence Nightingale film *The Lady with the Lamp*, which was attended by celebrities and royalty to raise money for the RCN education fund.
- 2 The RCN's very first public pay campaign was in 1962; the start of many lobbying campaigns for fair pay and patient safety, the most recent being the successful Scrap the Cap campaign.
- 3 RCN headquarters has its very own ghost. There are multiple reports of seeing the "grey lady" who is said to be the ghost of Lady Barrington, a former resident who died on the grand staircase after a fall.
- 4 RCN headquarters is home to the largest nursing and e-library collection in Europe, with many fantastic resources available to all members. The crowning jewel though is Florence Nightingale's very own bible.
- 5 The RCN produces four different magazines; the main one, *RCN Bulletin*, was seen in its first form as early as 1920, when it was sent out as a quarterly newsletter to its members.
- 6 Back then, there were only around 100 members (the organisation was actually started with just 34) but now the RCN has more than 435,000 members across the UK.
- 7 The student section of the RCN was originally called the Student Nurses' Association and was established as an affiliate organisation in 1925 (Princess Margaret was the patron). It became fully integrated with the main College in 1968.
- 8 The College has always had extensive royal support and a regular visitor at HQ was Queen Mary, who would drop in for afternoon tea. She was said to be such a fan of the cake served that she would send someone for takeaway if she couldn't make it in person.

Fadumo Indayare



"I thought my placement at the RCN would be a good opportunity to get an insight into a different aspect of nursing. One useful thing I've learnt about is the RCN Library. I didn't even realise it was here before,

let alone that it's the biggest nursing library in Europe! I'll definitely be coming back next year when I'm writing my dissertation."

Leonie Rockson-Kumi



"After my time at HQ, I'm keen to become an RCN student information officer (SIO). I've learnt so many things about the RCN and what it does and am very aware that not everyone will

have the chance to come and experience that first hand. Becoming an SIO means I'd be able to help other students learn what's on offer."

Riding the waves

Claire Carmichael writes about the best ways to stay cool, calm and collected as a student nurse

Being organised is the key to getting through university. I always try to make every minute count and use the extra time before, after and in-between lectures to get revision in, make extra notes and go over my practice placement documents. Prioritise, prioritise, prioritise. That's what I've learned.

Take a step back

When things get a bit much I try to find time to do some meditation. I have a technique I use to get rid of negative thoughts – imagine you have little window wipers on the front of your eyes, close your eyes and just watch them wipe back and forth, washing your worries away.

Or get your favourite song on, one that will lift your mood, and play it loud. As student nurses it's vital we take a little me time occasionally to recharge our batteries.

Stay motivated

If you find yourself in the middle of a difficult time, remind yourself why you started the course in the first place and remember the passion you have. You are the future of nursing. A career you will love – not just another job.

Think how proud the moment will be getting your PIN and starting your first shift as a registered nurse. Today was a bad day? That's ok, you have 365 blank pages to write. Rip out the bad page and start a fresh page tomorrow.

Claire is a student at Birmingham City University.



You are the
future of nursing

Stress and you

Download the RCN's *Stress and You: a Short Guide to Coping with Pressure and Stress* from www.rcn.org.uk/publications. The guide says that breathing techniques can help with stress. These can be done anywhere and at any time. Try breathing in for a count of 7, then paying attention to the surface(s) supporting you, breathe out for a count of 11. Within 3-4 breaths the adrenaline response associated with stress-related symptoms will calm and enable you to focus on your priorities or the task you are undertaking.

Download the RCN guide *Helping Students Get the Best from their Practice Placements* from www.rcn.org.uk/publications

Your RCN Students Committee

Helping to shape the nursing education agenda and RCN policy

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Make your mark

The RCN Students Committee is run by students for students, and makes the student voice heard on the issues that matter.

Voting is open for a number of seats on the RCN UK Students Committee from 20 November to 18 December. It is expected that seats in the Eastern region, South West region and Scotland will have more than one candidate so a vote will be called. If you're in one of these regions make sure to look out for the voting email from 20 November. Find out more at www.rcn.org.uk/elections



Contact your student committee representative via students@rcn.org.uk

If undelivered please return to: RCN Direct, Copse Walk, Cardiff Gate Business Park, Cardiff, CF23 8XG

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