

Armed Forces Community Research International Webinar Series

17 Sep 20

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Chair RCN Defence Nursing Forum



I am delighted to be able to join you today for this first meeting of the Armed Forces Community Research International Webinar Series. And have the opportunity to explain how one of our sponsors, the Royal College of Nursing supports the Armed Forces Nursing Personnel to provide the best care for our Armed Forces personnel and Veterans.

My role in the College is the chair of the Defence Nursing Forum, which is one of the many building blocks of nursing capability advancing nursing through the college and professional community.

In the next 20 minutes I would like to tell you a little about the Royal College, how it facilitates the Defence Nursing Forum promoting the health and wellbeing of the Armed Forces Community

I will outline how the members lead the work of the college by driving projects, research, webinars, resources, consultations, representations, subject matter expertise and member engagement for the benefit of the Armed Forces Community, with some context how the royal college and the Defence Nursing Forum came into being.

Defence Nursing Forum

- Advance Nursing



- Royal College
- Trade Union



The Royal College is the main professional body in the United Kingdom dedicated to advancing nursing practice, and with 450,000 nursing, student nurses, midwife and nursing support worker members it is the world's largest nursing union and professional body, carrying out work to promote excellence in practice and shaping health policy, as well as being a trade union.

The latter trade union function can have challenges for Armed Forces personnel who are not lawfully permitted to engage in strike action, and Trade Union representation is not permitted during Armed Forces complaints procedures. However, where the Royal College comes into the fore is where Armed Forces nurses meet challenges with their professional practice, and the Royal College have subject matter expertise for these special to type professional practice complaints, and the Armed Forces policy actively encourages engagement with trade union representatives for transparency, openness and honesty of proceedings.

You may wonder the rationale of the unusual combination of professional body and trade union, a little history will help us understand.



The Royal College was founded in 1916, to set up a register of trained nurses, at that time Registered Nurses had to be female. The College of Nursing receiving its royal charter in 1928, becoming the Royal College of Nursing in 1939 Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II is the patron.

American historian Susan Reverby portrays nurses as ‘ordered to care’ in a society that doesn’t value caring work, illustrating the on-going discrepancy between the perceived need for nurses and society’s willingness to pay for their services. In a ‘Voice for Nurses: A History of the Royal College of Nursing 1916-90’ co-authors Susan McGann, Anne Crowther and Rona Dougall offer a lens through which we can examine how similar tensions played out for the British nursing profession over the following 74-year period.

The RCN had set out to establish nursing as a profession, with a distinct body of knowledge and the desire to control and regulate nurse education. To achieve this the RCN found it had to focus on improving the conditions for nurses in the workplace, a key strategy towards professionalisation. It was this dual focus that positioned the RCN as a labour negotiator for British nurses and ultimately saw its registration as a trade union in 1977. The RCN prides itself on being the voice for nursing today when faced with similar challenges, such as safe staffing and pay disputes.

Defence Nursing Forum



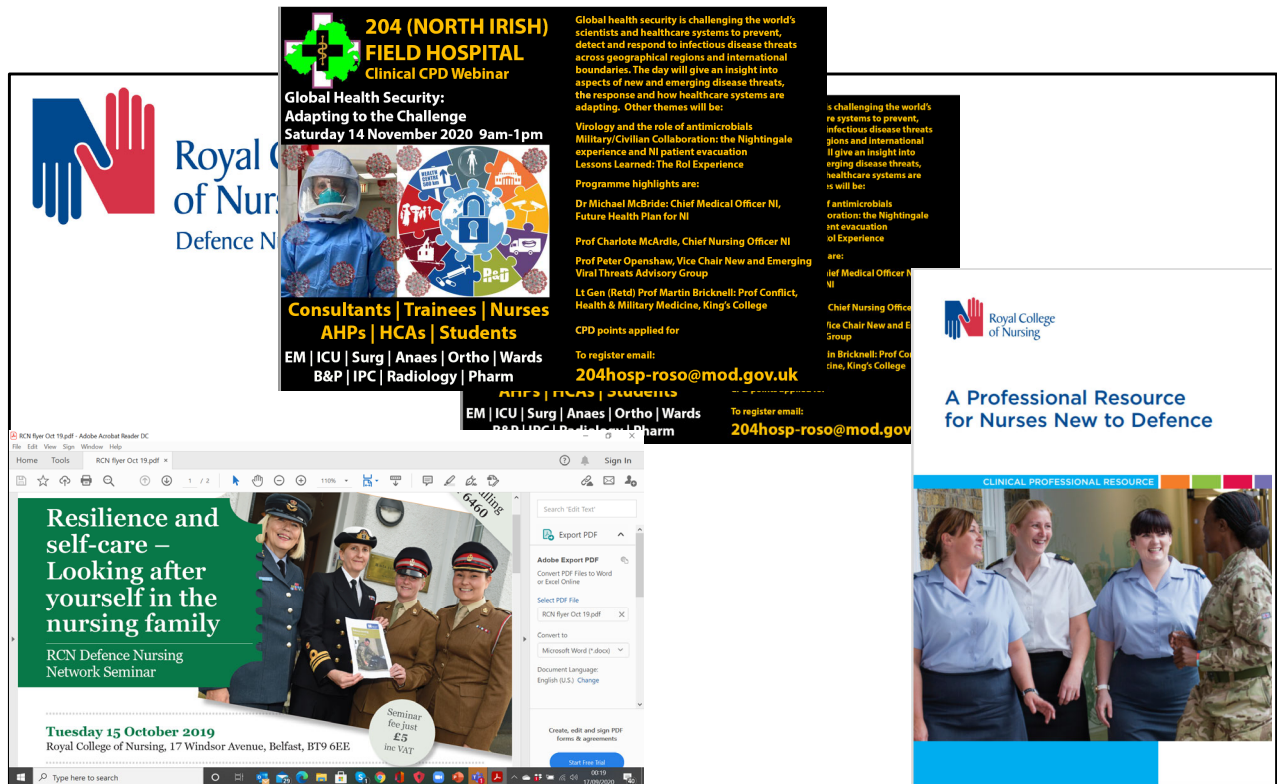
The RCN continued to grow after the second world war, in the form of local branches throughout the country, for communications and windows into nurses' working conditions. With the creation of the National Health Service in the UK in 1948, nurses became public employees and the influence of the RCN diminished as its voice for nursing. Educational reforms were a key strategy for nursing recruitment in the 1950s, now permitting married women and men to become registered nurses. As the challenges with workforce and conditions grew so did the College strategy of education and unionism, which continue to function today, as 'A Voice for Nurses' in national campaigns, lobbying government and professional networking, providing education and networking groups such as the professional forums.

Members of the college elect to join their regional Branches for geographical networking and specialist interest groups, or Forums, such as the Defence Nursing Forum, which is one of 35 Forums covering areas such as education, research, women's health, as well as clinical specialties such as general practice, pain and palliative care or children and young people.

In June 2004 the RCN endorsed a call from the Matrons in chief of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force, to have a requirement for a Forum that positively

recognises the special needs of the Armed Forces, and Prof Alan Finnegan became the inaugural Chair of the Defence Nursing Forum. The Forum welcomes Regular and Reserve Serving nurses and HCAs, civilian nurses employed by the Ministry of Defence, retired members, nursing students, civilian colleagues and those interested in Armed Forces Nursing.

Questions were asked why Defence needed its own Forum, the response was to embrace the operational imperative, of the need for going overseas, building a medical treatment facility, contend with the problems of the environment, in addition to any military hostility. The morbidity of the patient population may be extreme, yet feel like one of the family, even more important that the family can pull together. The Forum was keen to enhance the visibility of Armed Forces nurses within the profession and I have particularly enjoyed working on joint Forum projects such as membership engagement with governance where this can be achieved.



The Forums provide a focus for members to participate in professional activities, such as workshops and webinars, recent ones on resilience and future ones planned looking at global health security.

Provide a focus for RCN activity within the specialist area of interest, such as producing a publications for nurses new to Defence.

Provide a structure within the RCN for those specialist areas of interest and their associated accountability, and I am delighted that the Defence Nursing Forum is the College's subject matter experts for Armed Forces Serving Personnel and Veterans who contact the college looking for advice and guidance. We have recently designed a guidance note to assist any Armed Forces nurse undergoing fitness to practice challenges how they can utilise the RCN Trade Union Representatives, as well as the legal, coaching and counselling advice lines for support.

The Forums encourage all Armed Forces nursing staff to become involved with the RCN and engage with each other to improve their knowledge, skills and practice. We have just publishes 6 blog posts from Army Health Care Assistants about their additional duties during the COVID-19 pandemic, which ranged from family liaison to running PPE training in some of the busiest hospitals.

In the United Kingdom the Forums have the opportunity to work across the four countries of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, to share good practice, such as the Cadet Nursing scheme, where 16-year olds are welcomed into the healthcare world to look at opportunities that may be available to them.



Academically the Forums lead the development of work in the specialist area. Dr Janet Kelly will be publishing her articles on the needs of Veterans Families and the challenges of PTSD in the BMJ Military health in April next year.

Undertaking our own research we collected oral histories from Defence Nurses in Iraq and Afghanistan, which remain both a written and oral resource in the RCN Library, it is interesting to listen to these oral histories against those of the First and Second World Wars.

We aim to bring Armed Forces research evidence to members of the Royal College and are strongly supported by the library service with e-books such as Military Medicine in Iraq and Afghanistan, and full text editions of the BMJ Military Health. Armed Forces nurses have challenges with geographic mobility, and may find themselves without easy access to wifi. We aim to make accessibility to research evidence as easy as possible.

We provide literature reviews on Armed Forces Nursing and champion our members who have published articles recently, Lt Col Lynda Mathias on primary healthcare and Maj Pete Royal who published two articles in BMJ Military Health about the role of the military nurse practitioner on deployed operations, and his experience of providing primary healthcare out of the back of an armoured vehicle constantly on

the move.

We exploit social media to reach members with research and with Royal College consultations, such as the current consultation on the apprenticeship standards for a specialist clinical practitioner, this is an area where the Armed Forces has experience of specialists and experienced personnel over many deployments.

Defence Nursing Forum

ARMED FORCES COVENANT

service people leave the y annually

2000 on medical grounds

8% of a GP list 2080 out of 26,000

2.8 million

85% male

50% pre 1960

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We may collaborate with other Forums on joint projects such as the Flight Nursing Webinar event this week, and a leadership and management webinar in investing in yourself as a leader on 5 Nov. We will be working with the Research Society on competency assessment and undertaking a webinar of our own to promote the National Initiatives of the Armed Forces Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme. Our General Practice colleagues have undertaken 100 presentations to 4500 GPs and Practice Nurses across the UK.

The Forums propose agenda items for the annual RCN Congress, for discussion or debate, resulting in the RCN taking the agreed results of those discussions and debates and putting them into the College Strategy. The Forum proposed that the cultural health needs of Armed Forces and Veterans personnel were included in the national curriculum for nursing long before the Armed Forces Covenant came into being. The Royal College of GPs has the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant in their exam: from 2008 War Pensioners injured by military service should receive priority treatment compared to those of a similar clinical condition.

Our next Defence Nursing Webinar is to look at opportunities in primary healthcare and how Veterans can be more easily identified and more successfully signposted to

sources of assistance. Healthcare differences between the civilian and Armed Forces sector see differences in the social norms of geographic mobility and use of exercise and alcohol, stigma in mental health despite very low medical discharge and PTSD rates, Veterans unused to NHS systems, life is very structured with free prescriptions, dental care and appointment booking. The one-stop shop for Veterans, the Veterans Gateway is a source of information, advice and support for anything from healthcare and housing to employability, finances, personal relationships and more.

Thank you for listening



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