

RCN Forum Annual Report 2023

Forum Name: Gastrointestinal Forum

Chair: Kathy Whayman

Steering Committee Members: Alison Ball, Claire Coughlan, Julie Duncan, Rebekah Hill and Cathy Regan, Lisa Whitley.

Introduction:

As a forum, we have continued with the three central elements in our strategy - 3 Ls: Listening, Learning and Leading. The steering committee convenes every 6 weeks online to review our work based on this strategy and all projects and forum activity are underpinned by at least one of these elements. This is on the RCN forum website, and we continue to have positive feedback from our members that it closely reflects what they want from the committee and wider RCN. Members know about the strategy and can see the work we are doing via the 'our work' section on the website.

Our aim is to: LISTEN, LEARN & LEAD in gastrointestinal nursing at a local, national & international level. Using this strategy, we aim to work in collaboration with other forums and networks to share best practice, disseminate evidence, improve patient care, innovate, provide a strong nursing voice, and influence the development of this dynamic and wide-ranging specialty.

Listening

- Communication
- Networking
- Professional support

Learning

- Supporting education to promote excellence in practice
- Developing & sharing resources
- Coaching & Advice
- Research & innovation
- Knowledge dissemination

Leading

- Influencing - policy and practice
- Representing the forum - nationally raising profile of GI nursing
- Career development / opportunities/ coaching
- Promoting excellence in GI

The forum membership consists of members who are involved in all aspects of gastrointestinal care, including upper and lower GI surgery, gastroenterology, endoscopy, nutrition, liver care, IBD, functional and benign specialties, from wards to Specialist Nurse roles, in adult and childrens' nursing. There are members in the pharmaceutical industry, independent and private healthcare, working in education,

clinical research, charitable organisations in addition to the NHS. Gastrointestinal Nursing is a diverse and wide-reaching specialty and so the forum membership reflects this – there is a complexity of GI/ Gastroenterology sub-specialties and subsequently the nursing role is varied, extensive and provides huge opportunity for career development.

As part of our Strategy, the Forum also aims to:

- provide an effective communication network between forum members.
- provide a strong, recognised voice for GI nursing staff among nursing, medical, allied health professions, political bodies, service user groups and carer networks.
- promote quality educational opportunities that support standards of GI care.
- Promote and support GI nursing audit, research, and publication.
- Host a Facebook page, X account (formerly known as Twitter) & the RCN forum webpage.
- Be the specialist voice for wider RCN issues for example critical reflective practice (clinical supervision), infection prevention and control, staffing and fair pay.

Membership of the forum

Membership total: 4108 including 1st choice 2680.

Committee membership – Lisa Whitley joined the team in January 2023 following last year's recruitment. Julie Duncan and Claire Coughlan joined in January 2021, and all remain established and active steering committee members. Succession planning is always an important focus for the year ahead, and regular recruitment to the steering committee is vital to maintain the dynamic activity of this Forum. Two senior committee members Alison Ball and Kathy Whyman (Chair) are completing their term of office at the end of 2023. As part of this year's recruitment, Rebekah Hill and Cathy Regan will commence a 2nd 4-year term on the committee from January 2024 which is excellent news. In addition, we are delighted that in January 2024 following this year's recruitment, 3 new committee members join the group: Pearl Avery, Amanda Cetroni and Lisa Gower. With their input, we remain confident that the breadth of the speciality is demonstrated within the steering group – across the committee membership we represent education, clinical research, endoscopy, management, colorectal nursing, hepatobiliary nursing, inflammatory bowel disease and cancer nursing.

We will strive to continue to run a robust recruitment campaign, which recognises equality, diversity, inclusivity, and the need for digital and technological skills to help the committee continue to be representative of the membership. As part of the succession plan, the College now recommend appointing a Vice Chair or Co-Chair during elections for the new Chair and so it is hoped they will be in position when Kathy's term ends. Kathy will hand over to the new Chair carefully over the period of 4-6 weeks and will ensure that the transition is supportive and smooth.

Moving forward, the steering group's terms of office will be staggered, and they will not all end at the same time! We are confident that this will ensure continuity and momentum to our work over the coming years.

Achievements in 2023:

As we still see challenges for the workforce arising from the pandemic, and the rise in the cost of living, we are very pleased to have been able to continue our forum activity and support forum colleagues. We are delighted to report that we have continued to see the overall membership of the forum increase, and whilst there is still less face-to-face interaction than pre Covid-19, novel ways of connecting and communicating enhance the work we do. An important part of our listening and learning elements of the Strategy include continued regular contact with our specialist GI networks. Each member of the Committee links with sub-specialty groups/networks and feeds back to the team at our regular 6 weekly review. This is important so we remain current, a resource for our members, a link for the networks and a portal to help them disseminate information to GI Nurses. As new committee members of other GI specialist networks are appointed, it's good to make contact and discuss collaborative work and support. The updated Forum Member pack card about our forum was sent out to all members who listed our forum as their first choice.

We have continued to provide our regular blog although this year a little sporadically. Committee members time has been impacted by workforce pressures, but activity has been maintained. The aim is to provide a blog at least every quarter at key points in the year, - the topics reflect the RCN Forum calendar of key dates and GI events: topics this year included Bowel Cancer Awareness month (Colorectal); World IBD Day (IBD Nursing), most recently a review of Congress, and our end of year review.

RCN IBD Network: The IBD Network central committee meets quarterly via MS Teams and regional groups are increasing face to face meetings with a combination of education, practice sharing and networking. Their closed Facebook group also remains active and provides a great source of networking and peer support. Within these groups Julie Duncan has been proactively encouraging engagement with IBD nursing research projects. The forum committee continues to have regular contact with the IBD Network with the aim of mutual support and ensure the IBD CNS community's voice is heard. They will continue to push forward with projects in the new year to drive up standards of care, enhance patient experience, and support workforce/service development.

Julie Duncan and Isobel Mason co-led the development of **RCN Framework for Professional Practice for nurses in Inflammatory Bowel Disease** in adult and paediatric settings along with a working party of nurses working clinically and academically within IBD nursing and influenced by the patient voice. Publication of this was paused during industrial action but it is now due to be published shortly.

A major collaboration set up last year, and continues to be a success, has been with the **Gastrointestinal Nursing (GIN) Journal** with whom we have maintained an

excellent working partnership. steering committee member Rebekah has a place within the editorial board and committee members are regular reviewers. We provide a regular update column and are writing regularly on different topics affecting GI Nursing, and links with social media as well as participating in the annual conference. Forum members continue to obtain a discount on subscription to the journal and get support with writing for publication.

We are proud of our listening capabilities and our career section on the RCN GI forum website helps us celebrate the diversity of GI nursing and opportunities our speciality brings. This has had a good “hit rate” and we continue to advocate its use on our social media pages. By doing so, we have been asked a number of times for advice on career development, interview skills, some assistance with nurses writing for publication and conference presentations. Supporting the membership this way is a key element of the forum strategy and we will build on this going into 2024.

Social media:

Facebook

- Active group
- We currently have 1.391 members, approximately 10 posts per month – mainly from colleagues looking for advice or information. Endoscopy is most popular topic in posts and often about role Membership has increased a little since 2023 but the post engagement/activity has slightly decreased.
- Most popular day for engagement is Thursday afternoon, and the weekend. Most popular time for engagement is either 1pm or between 6pm - 9pm
- Need to work on increasing post reach and engagement.

FB Group Membership

- 93% female, 7% male.
- Age range remains between 34 to 65.
- Most members from the UK, but include Jersey, Australia, Netherlands, and Spain.
- UK locations for top 3 in membership remain in London, Stoke on Trent and then Birmingham.

Twitter (now X)

- 714 followers – this is an increase of 50 new followers for 2023.
- There are a variety of posts and some fantastic endorsements that this is a good network and supportive – we have lots of mentions from other networks. This is a rapidly growing opportunity for the Forum under the name @RCNGastro. It is an instant and recognisable forum for posting out information and news/events.
- All sub specialities are represented, and posts are always replied to by other members – runs itself with good moderation.

Achievements for 2023 and Plans for 2024

DONE - 2023

- ✓ Blogs on RCN website and social media
- ✓ Maintaining links with our forums and linking to RCN site
- ✓ Collaboration with 4 other forums working on RCN position statement and plans for clinical supervision / reflective practice.
- ✓ IBD Nursing Professional Framework work completed – in press.
- ✓ Completion of data analysis and publication in [October issue of Gastrointestinal journal](#): findings of research survey and the enablers for nurses to become research active
- ✓ MSc Colorectal Disease module accredited by University of Greenwich, with bursaries funded by Bowel Cancer UK: Claire Coughlan is the course author and leader and Alison Ball a course contributor.
- ✓ Attendance and contribution to debates on the podium at RCN Congress 2022
- ✓ Affiliation established between RCN Forum and Gastrointestinal Nursing Journal. Rebekah Hill also has a place on the Editorial Board.
- ✓ Alison Ball plans and leads our Congress activity - Kathy this year again represented GI forum at a Congress LWB Event – this was on Clinical Supervision. Alison and Claire represented the forum at the World Café for RCN Forums.

DOING - On Going Projects 2023/4

1. GI research project – Dissemination of findings, action plan and publication – Kathy presented in January 2023 at the GIN (Gastrointestinal Nursing) conference as a plenary session. She also was asked to speak on activity of nursing research at the National Nutrition Nurses Group Conference in York in June 2023. The Survey was conducted through GI forum and networks to develop a baseline understanding of research activity. To understand the capacity and capability of nurses to do research in their practice and we sought to assess the appetite for GI nurses for further development in research. One of the outcomes from this is to support n nurses with their participation and leadership in research and to develop confidence with presenting research findings and writing for publication.
2. MSc Colorectal Disease Module at University of Greenwich will be open to a second cohort in May 2024. Claire Coughlan is the course leader and Alison Ball, a course contributor.
3. The BSGNA (The British Society of Gastroenterology Nurses Association) are also looking into clinical research nursing career pathways and the forum will contact to explore collaboration and sharing of practice to help further this work (meeting in January 2024).
4. Supporting publications by members within the speciality - as above

5. GI competencies project - has been on hold through the pandemic but refreshed work has now begun and further development of this is planned for early 2024.
6. Update planned for Liver competency framework as this is now due for 2024.

Potential projects

- Kathy has had discussion with Colostomy UK regards their Smash Social Inclusion strategy. The Forum is very well placed to assist this campaign, and to take to a national stage in Congress (Newport) 2024. One element which is needed is lobbying of governments and organisations to install and maintain toilets big enough and equipped for people with stomas. A submission will be made for either an agenda item or a LWB event.
- Plan to submit a proposal for LWB event at Congress around the Gut.
- Potential FGG project for 2024: Development of guidelines for the establishment and delivery of nurse led IBD Advice Services.
- Cathy Regan has been working closely with the NNCEG and the Endoscopy Group in West Midlands who are looking to seek accreditation for their courses/study days from RCN: will require FGG bid. We will aim to submit this for April 2024.
- Recruitment Campaign for succession planning to steering committee for 2024 onwards

Plans for 2024

1. Continue to support RCN IBD Network
2. We will work on a GI competencies framework for ward-based nurses.
3. We will continue to collaborate with other specialist networks.
4. We will maintain and grow our social media presence on FB and Twitter.
5. We will increase our membership of the forum, as 1st choice.
6. We will have a full committee and work up some FGG projects, bids, and strategy for 2023/24.
7. Continue to publish articles exploring opportunities in GI Nursing - offering membership to write with us.

Chair's comments (Kathy Whayman):

This is my second year as Chair having taken over in January 2022. This year has been busy, and we have achieved what we set out to do. We have a very motivated and active team of experts on the committee, and it is a real pleasure to work with them. Recruitment to the committee has been successful, and we look forward to the input of our new steering committee members in the coming years. We are privileged to represent the forum members, to champion GI Nursing and we will continue to listen, learn, and lead in doing so. We await the appointment of a new Professional Lead – so needed for guidance and support of the work we do,

The Forum team wishes to thank Shirley Foster, our Project Coordinator and Louise Parker (Professional Lead), for joining our virtual meetings, supporting us through these difficult times. Thank you to Christine Callendar, and also

Sally Basset for leadership, support and guidance. We appreciate your advice and expertise. Thankyou.

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By: Kathy Whayman, Chair of Forum with assistance from the Forum Steering Committee.