

Council

Date of Meeting:	23 April 2015
Title of Paper:	Report Back from the Ethics Committee
Appendices:	None
Presented by:	Janet Holt, Chair
Is a decision required? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

1. The Ethics Committee met on 16 February 2015.

Media Training

2. We started our meeting with a training session on blogging and discussed setting up a Twitter hashtag to enable the Committee to engage members in debates on ethical issues.

Ethics Network

3. We then discussed the terms of reference for the newly established Ethics Network which will act as a sounding board for the Committee. We have agreed to hold the inaugural meeting of the Network in September 2015.

Ethics in Nursing Education/ Shape of Caring Review

4. We discussed and agreed the next steps for the proposed survey of HEIs to inform a statement on what should be taught in terms of ethical training as part of a pre-registration programme.

Planning for the Full Fellows Meeting in November 2015

5. We discussed arrangements for the 2015 Fellows meeting on nursing education.

Disclosure of Fees Paid to Health Professionals

6. From 2016, pharmaceutical companies across the European Union will be required to publish details of the payments they make to named health care professionals. At our meeting, we discussed the impact of this requirement on RCN members and how far the RCN should go in encouraging members to disclose the payments they receive from pharmaceutical companies.
7. Although health care professionals will be able to decline to disclose payments received, refusal may have professional consequences for them and all new contracts between pharmaceutical companies and individual health care professionals will now include a clause asking the practitioner to agree to disclosure.
8. It is anticipated that there will be significant media interest in the database and informed speculation suggests that it will be relatively easy for investigative journalists to discover the identities of “big players” who refuse to disclose their payments.
9. It should also be noted that the new arrangements also impact on the RCN as an organisation. The RCN must declare any monies received and cannot opt out of doing so. However, this requirement is entirely in line with our existing accounting practice and does not pose any difficulties for the College.
10. The RCN has already written to all Forum members alerting them to the new arrangements and our website will be regularly updated with new information as it becomes available.
11. There has been extensive dialogue between the pharmaceutical industry and the medical and nursing Royal Colleges in the run up to the new arrangements. Generally speaking the medical Royal Colleges have an ethical stance in favour of disclosure although they recognise that they cannot require their members and fellows to comply and will not necessarily know whether they have done so or not. The ABPI, which is putting the scheme in place, has suggested that the RCN should actively encourage its members to comply with the new procedures.
12. Although it is possible that some members will feel that disclosure is an invasion of their privacy, it is important that they are given accurate information about the reasons behind the move and the consequences of resisting disclosure. This is already covered in the RCN’s website resource, titled ‘pharma fees: what health professionals need to know’

but members do not currently have the benefit of an agreed ethical policy position from the RCN.

13. The Ethics Committee spent some time discussing the new requirements and we have agreed to recommend to Council:

“that the RCN adopts a stance in favour of transparency in relation to fee payments and that it encourages members to co-operate fully with the new requirements to disclose payments received”.

14. Council is requested to agree this recommendation.

RCN Position on the AllTrials Campaign

15. We discussed a paper from the Research Society on the AllTrials campaign and agreed to recommend to NPPC that the RCN supports the campaign.

Updates to the Committee

16. We discussed feedback from the Fellows summit on older people's nursing in December 2014 and received briefings on the Mental Capacity Act, the Leadership Alliance for the Care of Dying People and the 4 country position on assisted suicide.
17. We also noted updates from the BMA Ethics Committee and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics.

The Committee next meets on 30 April 2015.