



Royal College
of Nursing

OPINION

Dealing with
death: where's the
compassion for us?

CLINICAL

Bladder and
bowel care
basics

WELLBEING

Apps to
help you get
organised

RCN
STUDENTS

BE BOLD IN TACKLING RACISM

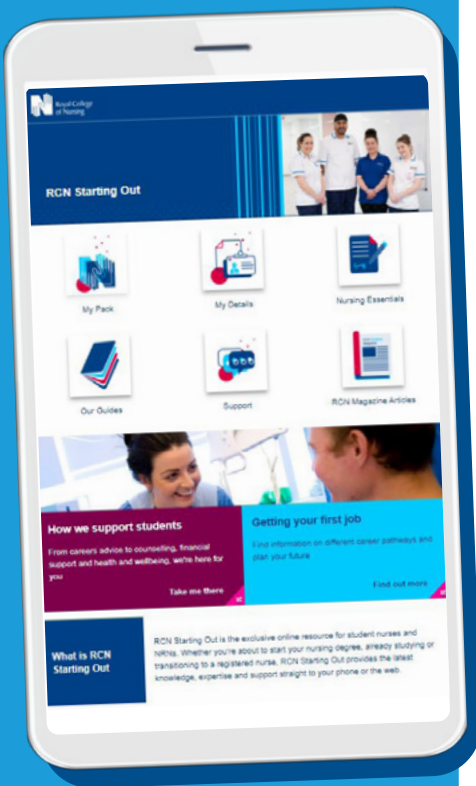
AUTUMN/WINTER 2021
[RCN.ORG.UK/STUDENTS MAG](https://rcn.org.uk/studentsmag)

HOW YOU CAN BE AN ALLY



Royal College
of Nursing

RCN Starting Out



RCN Starting Out is an exclusive online resource for nursing students and newly registered nurses. It provides the latest knowledge, expertise and support, all in one place.

Whether you're about to start your degree, already studying, or recently started your nursing career, **RCN Starting Out** will support your nursing journey. It allows you to make the most of your RCN membership and can be saved directly on your phone like an app or used as part of the RCN website.

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Heather Massie pictured by Ian Southerin

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Story to tell?

If you've got a story to share, email studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk
Did you know *RCN Students* is online?
Go to: rcn.org.uk/studentsmag

Editor: Sophie Goode
Production: Mark Kalaher
Design: Fern Bale
Published by: Royal College of Nursing,
20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN
Publication code: 009 959
Cover image: Rob Anderman



This issue of *RCN Students* went to press on 21 October. Find the latest RCN advice and information at rcn.org.uk

Hello

For members who may have just joined us, welcome to the RCN. Some of you will be right at the start of your nursing journey and there is a wealth of help, advice and guidance available to you within the College.

For those of you who have been with us a little longer, I hope your studies are continuing well, and as ever, we are here to support you – our members. You are all at the forefront of what we do. We have seen student members do some incredible things over the last few years, and your students committee is extremely proud of you.

Looking after ourselves and each other is paramount – take a look at page 6 to read Megan's ideas on how to ensure staff and students get the support they need when dealing with the death of a patient. On page 12 you can read our advice on how to help tackle racism in health care, and on page 14 find out about all the essentials of bowel and bladder care.

If you haven't already, please make sure to get involved with our Fair Pay for Nursing campaign – it's so vital for our profession. It's an ever-developing situation in each country so for all the latest see: rcn.org.uk/fairpay

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Heather Massie

Chair, RCN UK Students Committee
Student member, RCN Trade Union Committee

Your chance to represent nursing students

Nominations for elections to the RCN UK Students Committee are open for seats in the East Midlands, Northern, South West and Yorkshire & the Humber regions, as well as seats in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Committee members develop a lot of new skills and benefit from a range of experiences. They also enhance their knowledge of nursing issues at a local and UK-wide level.

If you're interested in taking on a rewarding student leadership role, why not stand for election to the committee?

Email elections@rcn.org.uk to find out more or discuss the role before putting yourself forward.

Voting is also open to elect student members to the RCN Professional Nursing Committee and the RCN Trade Union Committee. There is one student seat on each. Those elected will also sit on the RCN UK Students Committee as ex-officio members. Voting in both elections closes on 17 November. If you're a fully paid-up student member, you'll have received emails with links to the voting websites on 20 October.

Visit rcn.org.uk/elections for more information.



Our fight for fair pay intensifies

Members working for the NHS in England, Scotland and Wales are being asked what industrial action they're willing to take over pay. It comes after the vast majority of members who voted in consultations earlier this year said their NHS pay awards weren't good enough. As this issue went to press, we are waiting for the Northern Ireland Executive to announce the pay award for HSC staff which members will be consulted on. We're campaigning for a 12.5% pay increase for all nursing staff on Agenda for Change (AfC) contracts across the UK. If you're working on an AfC contract while studying, make sure your employer and workplace details are in MyRCN so you can have your say: rcn.org.uk/myrcn For more see: rcn.org.uk/fairpay

Free funding

The RCN has launched the Gabrielle Award for pre-registration nursing students studying at Queen's University of Belfast, Ulster University, or the Open University in Northern Ireland. Sponsored by Mary and Isobel Durkan, the award is in memory of their sister Gabrielle, who was a nurse.

It will provide nursing students with the opportunity to fund exploration of an aspect of nursing or health care they are passionate about and would like to take further.

For more information and an application form contact: claire.mcquillan@rcn.org.uk

Winter Wellbeing



Our [#winterwellbeing](#) campaign aims to support nursing staff and students to stay healthy this winter and encourages you to prioritise your own physical and mental wellbeing. Our range of resources includes advice about the COVID-19 and flu vaccines, as well as mindfulness and healthy eating guides. Helen Donovan, RCN Professional Lead for Public Health, says: "COVID-19, flu and norovirus spread easily to vulnerable groups and staff. It's important to take time for yourself and look after your own health this winter." Visit: rcn.org.uk/winterwellbeing

STUDY TIPS

Find out what your RCN Library and Archive Service has to offer by visiting our website today: rcn.org.uk/library. This is your gateway to a huge number of resources as well as training and support. On the website you can use our "Library Search" tool to quickly find articles and books in both our physical libraries and online. Also keep an eye out on our [@RCNLibraries](#) Twitter feed for top tips for study success and follow RCN Libraries on Instagram and Facebook.

TOP FIVE

Recently released resources

1. Student money guide

Advice on managing your finances as a student: rcn.org.uk/student-money-guide

2. Just about to graduate

Key information to support your transition to becoming a registered nurse: rcn.org.uk/publications (code 009 800)

3. Students: thinking about your career

Guidance to help you consider future options: rcn.org.uk/publications (code 009 793)

4. Nursing workforce standards

Standards you should expect from employers to ensure the delivery of safe patient care: rcn.org.uk/publications (code 009 681)

5. Mouth care matters in end-of-life care

Guidance to support the delivery of safe and effective mouth care for adults in end-of-life care: rcn.org.uk/publications (code 009 921)

UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

16 NOV

Time to practise self-care and meditate

1 DEC

RCN Women's Health Forum conference

19 NOV

Student ambassador virtual conference

24 MAR 2022

RCN Clinical Research Nursing conference

30 NOV

Writing for publication with the Royal Literary Fund

26-27 APRIL 2022

RCN Education Forum conference and exhibition



Find details of all these events and more: rcn.org.uk/events

Dealing with death

It's time to prioritise support for nursing students dealing with the death of a patient, says Megan

*Megan Sutherland
pictured by
Chris Sutherland
Photography*



As nursing staff, we learn that compassion is the cornerstone of nursing, but when it comes to the death of a patient, where is the compassion for us?

Surely, it's only reasonable to expect that health care staff may feel some form of grief or bereavement when one of their patients dies. But from my experience as a student, there's little support directly related to self-care after death. This needs to change.

Caring for a patient at the end of life and performing "last offices" – the care given to a body after death – can be a highly emotional experience.

But the stigma of talking about it – and the feeling that as nursing staff we should just rally around and "get on with it" – is very real. The pandemic has exacerbated this.

From washing a patient to supporting the family, our

role is key. And as nursing staff that can become very normal. Then it starts to become treated as an everyday task – when actually it's far from it.

A ton of bricks

I've had the experience of performing last offices and then going on to care for a living patient thinking I'm absolutely fine. It's only when I get home that it hits me like a ton of bricks. I've

been lucky to have a brilliant support network, but I know it's not like this for everyone.

It's become clearer to me that nurturing the mental health of staff at this stage in patient care is absolutely paramount, not only for the wellbeing of the staff member but also because it directly affects the quality of care we provide to patients who are living.

There is no huge change that can be implemented right now – it won't be an overnight fix. We all know how stoic the nursing profession can be. We don't always like to talk about how we're feeling. But burnout is a real issue and we need to look at small changes we could make to stop the ball rolling in that direction in the future.

I'd like to see better signposting introduced in staff-only areas to support those involved in last offices. Ideally it would be alongside a small flyer or card integrated into the care after death process that simply reads: "If you require further support, please contact...". This would provide a discrete, anonymous way for students and staff to access help if needed.

It's not a big change but would make a huge impact by acknowledging that dealing with

death can be hard and it's OK to feel that way about it. It would help to validate what people are going through by recognising the magnitude of it all and help them to feel supported and listened to.

Reduce the stigma

But what else can we do right now as students and newly qualified nurses to help shift the culture around death? Together we can start opening up conversations with our peers about improved support for our mental wellbeing.

We can keep talking, and we can keep asking questions. Just because something is the norm, it doesn't mean it should stay that way. Importantly, we can make sure we reach out for help if we're struggling – it's a strength to recognise this and to take a step back if that's what's needed.

Finally, we can continue to look out for each other. Surround ourselves with supportive people and don't continue the stigma by not talking. Voicing things little by little helps prevent them turning into something more overwhelming so we can progress through our nursing career with more strength and resilience.

Megan Sutherland has recently completed her studies in Scotland

“

Where is the compassion for us?



Supporting you

The RCN offers a free confidential counselling service over the telephone for members, including trauma-focused therapy. Visit: rcn.org.uk/counselling for further information or to book an appointment call RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100.

The RCN has a number of resources on end of life care including a wellbeing programme for nursing staff: rcn.org.uk/eolc

Working together to achieve change

From industrial action in Northern Ireland to facing the pandemic, we hear how Catherine, recently crowned RCN Student Ambassador of the Year, used her ambassador role to consistently advocate for students

“When I first started as an RCN Student Ambassador, I felt like a very small part of the RCN machine,” says Catherine. “After a while I realised that everybody’s role is important, and what matters most is coming together as one.”

When RCN Northern Ireland began its industrial action in 2019, Catherine encouraged her peers to get involved wherever they could.

“Students played a major role. I wanted to be a part of it all because even though students couldn’t vote in the consultations and ballots which led to the industrial action, we were still a part of the profession that was being affected by unfair pay and unsafe staffing,” she says.

“It was important for us to speak up and support the union and support our colleagues, but at the same time make sure we were protected. Other student ambassadors and I were very instrumental in that role.”

Catherine not only took part in demonstrations and protested on picket lines, she helped her university to liaise with students taking part.

“During the strike action, I remember one day it was lashing with rain. Outside it was freezing cold, but the energy was fantastic.”

On the frontline

Catherine was part of the first student cohort asked to join the workforce when the COVID-19 pandemic hit as she was nearing the end of her final year.

She explains: “It was incredibly difficult because all the information was changing – not just on a daily basis, but sometimes changing several times throughout that day.”

During the pandemic Catherine worked in a rapid response team set up by Queen’s University Belfast to support and troubleshoot any issues students faced on placement or in their academic studies.

While it was difficult not to get overwhelmed, having the RCN and her university behind her made a difference.

“We were meeting with members of the school as well as members of the union, so there were a lot of different aspects to my role. I was a student, I was an ambassador, and I was part of the workforce.”

Amplifying student voices

Catherine was a mature student and she balanced her studies around raising six children. Over the past year, when the pressure was on, she thought about taking a step back to focus on her family, but instead she chose to continue her degree.

“I had trained for three years to get to this point, and I thought I had a lot to contribute. All nursing students give a lot to the workforce,” she says.

“When I qualified, I realised that in a profession like



Catherine McLaughlin
pictured by Aaron McCracken



The RCN Student Ambassador role is for a nursing student who is passionate, who wants to make a difference, who has energy and enthusiasm and who is willing to become active with the RCN to make positive changes.

Go to: rcn.org.uk/student-ambassador

Find out more about the RCN newly registered nurse network: rcn.org.uk/nrn-network

nursing, you're never not a student. You're learning every single day and the education journey continues throughout your career."

Catherine was encouraged to run for an elected position on the RCN Northern Ireland Board, and even though she didn't win, she came away feeling "ten feet tall".

"It's about trying to convey the positive messages," she says. "We have a lot of challenges in

nursing, but we need to talk about the good stuff as well. These problems won't just go away, but if we work together and support each other, that's how we'll achieve change."

Catherine qualified this year and now works as a surgical vascular nurse. She's been instrumental in setting up a newly registered nurse network in Northern Ireland (@RCN_NI_NRN) and is awaiting her steward training.

“

Nursing students contribute a lot to the workforce

Get your apps together

From scheduling your shifts to helpful time-keeping tools, we've found some of the best apps to make the most of your time

Scheduling

MyDuty allows you to keep track of your busy shift schedules. It's a useful calendar sharing device to help you organise your shifts. The app can also link up with family devices, so you can keep on top of your work-life balance. It's free to download and use, but there are some in-app purchases if you want to get more out of it. It's aimed at registered nurses and hospital managers, but don't be put off, it can be used by anyone working in health care. Visit: myduty.kr



Task tracking

Todoist lets you create various to-do lists, tracking your tasks as you go and sending you helpful reminders. It's easy to set up recurring tasks and it allows you to assign tasks to others to enable more linked-up, collaborative working. You can prioritise as you go and track how well you're doing, which can help you find areas to improve or take note of jobs that might be better delegated to others. The app has a free version with all the basics included, although you can subscribe to access more functions. Visit: todoist.com



Time keeping

If time management is an area where you struggle, **Time Timer** can help, especially if you're multi-tasking. It allows you to manage several timers at once, and comes with an easily understandable, visual clockface so you can see how much time has passed and how much is left to go. You can name and customise your timers, save them for future use, choose alarms to signal when different timers go off, and see up to four timers at once. It's free to download and comes without ads, but it's only available for Apple devices. Visit: timetimer.com/products/time-timer-ios-app



Download our
campaigning
app:
campaigns.
rcn.org.uk

Storing your details

If you struggle to keep track of all your logins and passwords, **Last Pass** – a protector and organiser app – will help you access all your details easily. From your RCN login to your Netflix account, keep them safe and all in one place so you don't get lost in the endless cycle of forgetting your password and changing it every time you access your favourite digital platforms. It's free to download on any smart device. Visit: lastpass.com/password-manager

Work tracker

Toggl Track keeps a record of your working hours, and you can use the data it gathers to assess how much time you're spending on doing different things. This might help you keep a record of your work-life balance, and most of all, make sure you take time for a break. The app is free to use. Visit: toggl.com/track/mobile-time-tracking-app

Don't forget to check out **Starting Out** – the RCN's exclusive online resource for nursing students and newly registered nurses. Turn to page 2 for more information or visit: rcn.org.uk/startingout

*The RCN does
not take any
responsibility for
apps we haven't
developed*

Offline help

Create designated spaces for all your important things, such as your wallet, keys, phone, face masks and hand sanitiser. This way, when you're rushing out the door, you know there are only two or three places where all your necessary belongings will be. Use designated dishes, drawers or bags, or use recognisable places that are easily memorable – and be diligent about returning those items at the end of the day.

Be bold in tackling racism

Vanessa explains how you can be an ally and help call out racism

Vanessa Anthony
pictured by Rob
Anderman



As a nursing student, racism can be a major obstacle. We're told we have to advocate for our patients, but when it comes to racism, we have to advocate for ourselves and for our peers too.

As an ally, it's important to listen to our challenges – to our truths – and be prepared to make changes. There are a few things you can do to help.

1. Offer support

Check in on your black, Asian and minority ethnic peers. It can feel like nursing staff sometimes

forget what it's like to be a student – moving placements and often only being somewhere for a short period of time – always needing to conform and adapt. Each movement brings a new set of challenges, and it can feel like there is little to no support.

2. Listen

It's important to listen to the voices of black, Asian and minority ethnic nursing students and staff. Not just listen – but actively listen. Ask questions and reflect on what's being said.

“

We're all
human
beings and
we're all part
of this

3. Think about it

Whatever your race or background, think about how you would feel if you were in a situation where you didn't feel like you were fitting in. If every time someone said your name, they mispronounced it, or decided to shorten it without your permission. People don't realise how often they cross boundaries.

4. Challenge racism

If you witness something that isn't right, you need to say so. It can be difficult to prove and often those on the receiving end are too afraid to report it. We have to work together to eliminate the

fear and say: this isn't on. We're all human beings and we're all part of this.

If you're on the receiving end, please do speak up. There's always someone else going through what you're going through – don't suffer on your own.

5. Keep talking

Everyone is welcome at university black, Asian and minority ethnic societies, networks and groups. When you qualify, look at joining black, Asian and minority ethnic strategic groups and networks at work. By getting involved

The RCN has produced a series of audio recordings, *Nursing Whilst Black*, to showcase the diversity of voices across nursing today: rcn.org.uk/nursing-whilst-black

you'll find out what's happening and what's needed for us to improve this amazing profession – nursing. The more of us who come together, the more of us who can make a change.

**READ MORE
ONLINE**
[rcn.org.uk/
studentsmag](http://rcn.org.uk/studentsmag)

Vanessa Anthony represents the London region on the RCN UK Students Committee

Speak out

Nursing lecturer Sheila Sobrany says it's time to be proactive

If you see anyone being subjected to discrimination during your placement, I urge you to speak out. Follow the protocols and policies for raising concerns. Always report what you've seen or experienced, documenting what happened and noting how it made you feel.

I understand this may feel challenging and frightening when all you really want is to get signed off with minimum fuss. That's why we need safe psychological spaces and a specialised reporting outlet with a support network that takes action, so students can be confident these issues will be dealt with properly.

If you witness or experience race discrimination in the classroom, approach the teacher in private in the first instance. Talk about it and check for misunderstanding. But always address this at the first opportunity and at programme level if necessary.

To combat discrimination, we need people to be proactive and become transformational leaders to tackle issues head-on. It's so important that students can see leadership models from their own backgrounds to help and empower them.

This is a challenging topic. Some people find it difficult to know what to say and are even worried they might say the wrong thing. But it's important for everyone to get involved – whatever your race or background.



See the RCN advice guide on discrimination: rcn.org.uk/discrimination

Bladder and bowel care

Read up on the essentials as we highlight our latest e-learning resource

There are an estimated 14 million men, women and children living with bladder problems in the UK, and around 6.5 million adults suffering with bowel issues.

These can be debilitating, embarrassing, and life changing, so we've outlined the basics of some common conditions that every health and social care professional should know.

Incontinence

Incontinence is when a person has trouble controlling their bladder or bowel. There are several types of urinary incontinence, which often involve urine leaking from the urethra, sudden urges to urinate, and a person's inability to empty a full bladder.

Faecal incontinence has similar symptoms, but affecting the bowel, and includes incidences of a person soiling themselves without realising they needed the toilet.

Health and social care professionals must maintain compassion when treating patients with these issues, and it's important to offer appropriate and sensitive solutions.

Our latest e-learning resource on bladder and bowel care has specific advice for any health and social care professional looking to boost their knowledge of this condition.

Infections

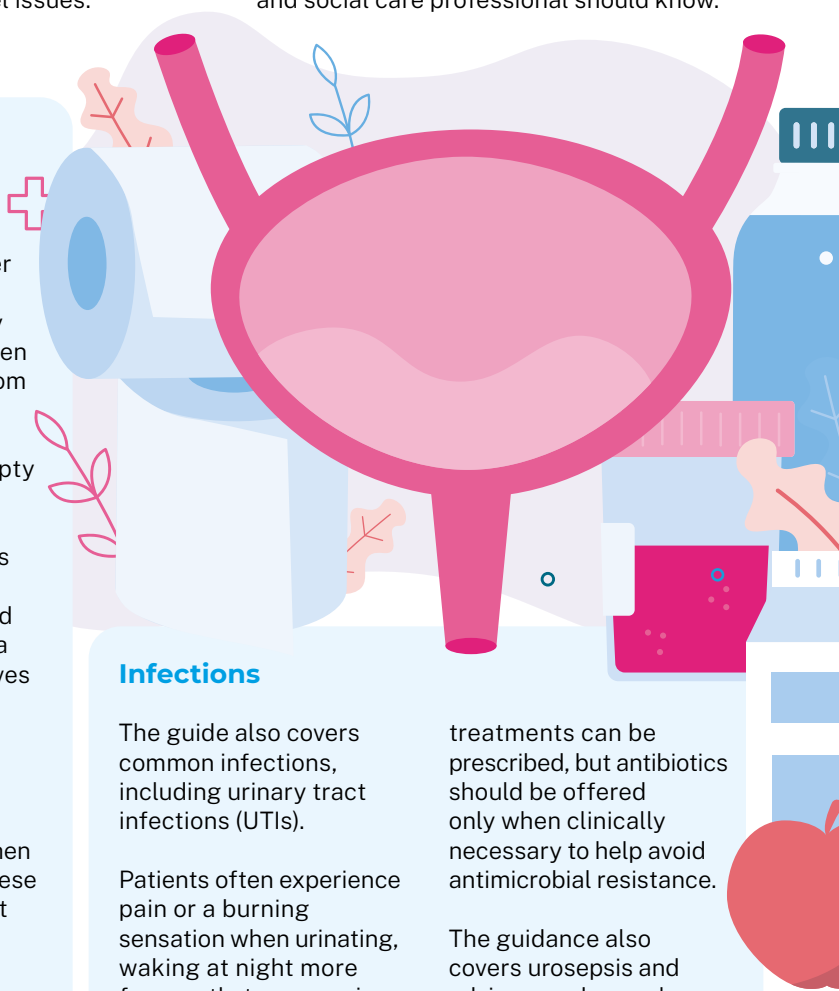
The guide also covers common infections, including urinary tract infections (UTIs).

Patients often experience pain or a burning sensation when urinating, waking at night more frequently to pass urine, flu-like symptoms, and needing to urinate more urgently than usual.

UTIs are known to come back after treatment, and this is when stronger

treatments can be prescribed, but antibiotics should be offered only when clinically necessary to help avoid antimicrobial resistance.

The guidance also covers urosepsis and advises readers on how to spot sepsis in adults using an early warning score. Catheter infections are also covered, as are considerations on dipstick testing – known as To Dip or Not to Dip.



Inflammatory bowel disease

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a term used to describe two conditions: ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.

They are both long-term conditions that involve the inflammation of the gut.

Colitis only affects the colon, while Crohn's disease can affect any

part of the digestive system, from the mouth to the anus. Symptoms can include pain, cramps or swelling in the abdomen, recurring or bloody diarrhoea, weight loss and extreme tiredness.

While there is no cure, both conditions can be managed with prescriptions, surgeries and diets.

Supporting you

Launched during this year's World Continence Week in June, our e-learning resource recognises the vital role nursing staff play in caring for patients with bladder and bowel conditions.

It aims to support RCN members to promote continence and manage incontinence for people with bladder and bowel problems, as well as offering general advice, key information and guidance on bladder and bowel health.

It's not only for registered nurses, but also nursing students and nursing support workers.

"With this resource, we aim to support members to promote continence and manage incontinence for people with bladder and bowel problems," says Ali Wileman, RCN Bladder and Bowel Forum Chair.

"Previous guidance has been widely used and there are new tools to support decision-making, specific patient needs, dipstick testing, recognising various infections and sepsis.

"It's so important that this group of patients receive the care they need and deserve, and every health professional they encounter should be able to offer them support."

Access the full resource:
rcn.org.uk/bladder-and-bowel-care

Find more information on the RCN Bladder and Bowel Forum: rcn.org.uk/bladder-and-bowel-forum

Clinical ambition

You don't need to take the management route to progress your career, says Shallini, as she reflects on her journey to becoming a trainee advanced nurse practitioner

Being a manager isn't the only option for ambitious nurses. If you know how to treat people and be a leader, you can focus on developing your clinical skills as a way of progressing your nursing career.

When I first started out, I didn't know what direction I wanted to go in and was told the only way for me to progress was to be a manager. But there are opportunities out there for you to develop your clinical skills. Nurses now have more chances to take on advanced roles in every field of nursing than ever before. Advanced nurse practitioners are implementing services and are autonomous in clinical decision-making.

If clinical work is your passion, pursue it. Patient satisfaction and having an impact on care was my drive to pursuing a more clinical role.

A mentor's influence

The superb mentoring I received had a huge influence on my journey, as a student and now as a registered nurse. Quite a few mentors stand out in my memory but the most influential was Debbie,



who I worked with during my placement on a stroke unit. She told me she could see me as a specialist nurse in the future.

Like me, management was never her passion. She was never afraid to

“

Don't be afraid of failure

about strokes. These small things stay with you and make a big difference.

Believe in yourself

Having such a supportive mentor transformed my ability to believe in what I can do. Having self-belief and confidence is so important. Nursing is a tough course, and you must believe in your ability and cultivate your passion to get through.

Don't be afraid of failure though. It may not be possible to get it right first time, every time. The academic part of your nurse training is hard, so if you hit a rocky patch, don't give up. Debbie knew how to tell a student they'd got something wrong without destroying their confidence. Learning is a process, so ask if you're not sure.

It's OK to acknowledge your limitations and mistakes. We're all still learning, and experienced nurses make mistakes too. However, to learn you must go through these experiences yourself.

Whatever stage you're at with your nurse training, uncertainty is not unusual.

I quickly felt an affiliation to stroke nursing but not everyone feels that quick connection to a particular field, so I'd recommend making the most of your placements.

One mentor advised me to set some personal goals during my placements. Ask yourself if you like surgery, for example. Can you imagine yourself working in this field or on this ward in the future? Don't get so immersed in your academic work that you lose sight of the bigger picture and your long-term goals.

And take time to reflect. Don't see reflection as a tick-box exercise but something that can really help you grow if you do it all the way through your placements.

I've now been working for the NHS for 10 years and my career journey has developed from many different roles. I'm proud that I've advanced my career while maintaining patient contact, but my learning continues. I'm sure that all my nursing experiences, including the less positive ones, will help me develop further so I can continue my journey to be the role model I aspire to be.

*Shallini pictured by
Rob Anderman*

share her experiences and encourage me. She had all the characteristics and knowledge I aspired to have. Debbie would always find time for her students – I remember her drawing a picture of a brain for me when I was first learning



Your career

The RCN has a whole range of resources to help you on your career journey, including advice on CV writing, job applications, interview skills, different roles within nursing and much more. Visit: rcn.org.uk/student-career

'We all need to be political'

Lucy shares her opinion on the vital role of politics within nursing

When you think of nursing and politics, what springs to mind?

Maybe it's nursing pay? Certainly you can't have missed it. Or maybe you think about health policy and how that might have an impact on your working day, or your patients and the care you can give them?

Perhaps you think of safe staffing levels and retention? Mandated vaccines for health care workers? COVID policies? Maybe mandated hours spring to mind or placement availability. Or student funding?

Indeed, these are all things which can have an impact on the lives of nursing staff, and sometimes, consequently, on the lives of our patients. But they are also just the obvious ways that politics has an impact on nursing.

When you're a nurse, you want what's best for your patients. Part of your job is to advocate for that. With the NHS, health care is free for all at the point of access. It doesn't matter if you're unemployed, or a child, if you work a 40-hour week, if you're a CEO or a minimum wage worker, if you drive a Porsche or catch the bus, you should get the same treatment, right?

Unfortunately, in reality this isn't always true.

Numerous studies have shown poorer health outcomes for different groups of people. People from minority ethnic backgrounds tend to have poorer health outcomes. So do people living with low socio-economic status. As do those people who have learning disabilities or mental health conditions – beyond that of the physical illnesses that



may be a part of their conditions. And it is also true of patients who identify as LGBTQ+.

Access, experience and outcomes can be influenced by where people live in the country – not just how close they are to a hospital or how many GPs there are – but in less noticeable ways too.

It's important that we understand the causes and impacts of health inequalities so we can do what's in our power to help our patients. While so much is systemic, often, the factors affecting inequalities can be changed.

Can we support our patients to make changes which will positively affect their health, such as quitting smoking, or exercising more? And can we tailor this to their individual circumstances?



Stock images



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**When you're
a nurse you
want what's
best for your
patients**

Let's take someone with depression who came to hospital with diabetes. Let's say they are overweight, they do little exercise, they frequently miss their insulin dose. If we just give them advice to exercise, eat better, and take their insulin, are they going to do this? Maybe. But it's also possible that their depression is having an impact on their eating and exercise behaviours, and their ability to look after themselves.

For this person we might want to add in work with a therapist, or maybe they can visit a day centre where they'll get help to make sure they take their insulin and receive mental health support. This is also political because

the government might have cut funding for mental health services. Maybe they've cut funding for exercise programmes too.

Can we do something on a larger scale? Political decisions about the focus and scale of funding of public services has meant that often services which can help people have been cut back, meaning that the patients who really need the help may no longer be getting it. There are also issues to do with housing, the cost of living and access to healthy food.

Nursing staff and students can help with these things through the way we tailor care, and through signposting, and outreach initiatives, but resolving socio-economic determinants of health doesn't stop with us. It's not "just" a nursing issue, it's political. And that's why all nursing staff should be political. We have the knowledge, the expertise, the lived experience – we see how health inequalities affect our patients. We can make our voices heard. Sign petitions. Write to MPs.

When we think about what is best for our patients, does that stop when they are discharged, or do we want it to continue?

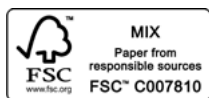
Let's stand for that change.
We are the future of nursing.

Lucy Hayes represents the West Midlands region on the RCN UK Students Committee



Use your voice to demand change for nursing.
Get involved with the RCN's campaigning work:
rcn.org.uk/campaigns

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Royal College of Nursing
Copse Walk
Cardiff Gate Business Park
Cardiff
CF23 8XG



Your RCN UK Students Committee

Representing you



Heather Massie (Chair)
Trade Union Committee



Shaun Williams
Student member of RCN Council



Kendal Moran
Professional Nursing Committee



Scott Doughty (Vice Chair)
Northern

Country and regional representatives



Rebecca Emmins
Eastern



Molly Kiltie
East Midlands



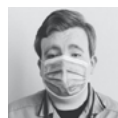
Vanessa Anthony
London



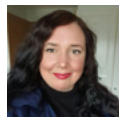
Gary McCrea
Northern Ireland



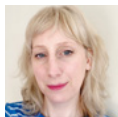
Lynsey McLaughlin
Northern Ireland



James Savage
North West



Katie Tomlinson
Scotland



Hannah Featherstone
Scotland



Cyzel Gomes
South East



Lucia Assirati
South West



Lucy Hayes
West Midlands

Thinking about standing for election to the committee? Find out what to do next on page 4.

What does the committee do?

The RCN UK Students Committee is led by students for students, and makes the student voice heard on the issues that matter to you

The committee reports directly to RCN Council – the RCN's governing body.
Contact your student committee representative: students@rcn.org.uk