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Abigail Harris
Chief Executive
Swansea Bay University Health Board
1 Talbot Gateway
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Tuesday 28 January 2025

Dear Abigail Harris,

On Thursday 16 January, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) released a harrowing report exposing the devastating impact of corridor care on patients and healthcare professionals in hospitals in Wales and across the UK.

Following this, on Tuesday 28 January, RCN Wales published a policy report setting out our recommendations for action to end corridor care in Wales. They include classifying treatment in a chair lasting over 24 hours as a Never Event, as well as a national review of NHS Wales capacity followed up by investment targeted where it is needed most.

Corridor care—the practice of treating patients in hallways, chairs, or other inappropriate settings—has become a daily reality for many frontline health care workers. Overcrowded facilities, insufficient resources, and high patient demand have forced nurses and other staff to deliver care in environments that compromise safety, dignity, and quality.

Corridor care is happening in your health board. The testimonies below, all from within your health board, show its impact on your nursing staff, RCN members, and patients.

Continued.....

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Yr Athro/Professor Nicola Ranger

Cyfarwyddwr Gweithredol Coleg Nyrsio Brenhinol Cymru/ Executive Director of RCN Wales
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Rydym yn buddsoddi mewn llesiant Arian

Mae'r Coleg Nyrsio Brenhinol yn Goleg Brenhinol a sefydlwyd drwy Siarter Frenhinol ac Undeb Llafur Cofestr Arbennig a sefydlwyd a dan Ddeddf Undebau Llafur (Cydgrynhoi) 1992.

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“Emergencies have happened in the middle of corridors, with other patients witnessing. Really poorly patients are regularly being made to sit on a chair, sometimes for 2 days or even more. Patients in [one hospital department] are waiting up to a week for a bed. There is inadequate equipment and facilities. Staff are up in arms about it.”

“I took my mother to hospital due to complications with COPD, on entering the ER, the waiting room was full, we were triaged and my mother was checked over, as my mother had her own small oxygen bottle, she was told to keep using it and if it run out to ask for a new one. We were told to wait in the waiting room. We were called in and out of a room, obviously taken then always told to go back into the waiting room. My mother is 78, she has had a stroke with little use of her left side, she has COPD, Lymphedema and is type 2 Diabetic, she finds sitting in the same position for long periods painful yet she had to sit in her wheel chair for several hours, only being offered one ham sandwich and a cup of tea.”

“When we were finally seen by a doctor, we were told to follow him through several corridors, until in the end he stopped, turned to my mother and started to discuss my mothers condition with her, after a few moments, he turned and looked at a doorway and said ‘if I need to examine you, do you mind if we go in there?’ ‘Well that's a disabled toile’ I replied, I could see that the doctor was mortified, he responded today that, we had the right to refuse but if we did, we would have to wait several more hours for a cubical to become available. Mam chose to examined in the toilet, we were thankfully able to then go home after the assessment.”

Your health board’s values include “caring for each other” and “always improving”. I am sure you agree that this is not the standard of care that your health board aims to deliver.

Nursing staff work tirelessly day and night to provide the highest standard of care for patients. But the normalisation of corridor care severely hinders their ability to do that. RCN Wales members are no longer willing to tolerate this unacceptable situation.

This issue needs urgent action at a Welsh Government level, and I have written to

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the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care to that end. However, action must also be taken at the health board level as you have a duty, under Section 25A of the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016, to take into account the importance of sensitive nursing care. No amount of skill or effort can make corridor care “sensitive”. It is inherently intolerable.

Our recommendations published in today’s briefing are clear, achievable actions that can improve transparency and ultimately put an end to corridor care.

Given the severity of RCN Wales’s concerns, I am urgently seeking your assurance on the actions Swansea Bay University Health Board is taking to make sure that corridor care is eradicated. Specifically, I would welcome details on the following:

- Staffing level increases where areas are above the planned capacity.
- Compliance with the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016 25A and 25B duties.
- Activity on the Welsh Government’s 50-Day Challenge and whole-system care pathways.

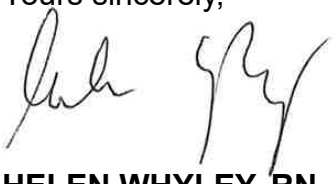
Please provide me with details of all your actions as a matter of urgency.

The lives and safety of patients are at risk.

If you would like to meet with me to discuss this letter, please contact my office as detailed above.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,



HELEN WHYLEY, RN, MA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RCN WALES

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