



FINDING TIME TO RELAX  
P10 FEATURES

NURSING ON OPEN WATER  
P12 FEATURES

FIGHTING FGM  
P13 FEATURES

ISSUE NO. 354 AUGUST 2017



# EVERY LITTLE HELPS

MAKING A STAND AGAINST THE PAY CAP

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies.

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## Pressures increase for district nursing

An independent report has revealed that cuts to district nursing mean older people are turning to acute hospital care.

Industry experts, including the RCN, contributed to research conducted by Christie & Co, which found the number of district nurses has dropped by 44% since 2010.

Janet Davies, RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary, said: "Older people are being let down by a cut-price social care system that struggles to provide basic and dignified care. District and community nursing staff should be there to help older people to stay well and live independently for longer. But the loss of nearly half is one of the reasons older people aren't being properly supported."

## Update your details

Make sure your details are correct on the RCN database to ensure you receive the most recent news and information.

You can also make sure you receive all the relevant news by adding an email address too.

Visit: [www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn](http://www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn)  
Phone: 0345 7726 100  
Email: [membership@rcn.org.uk](mailto:membership@rcn.org.uk)

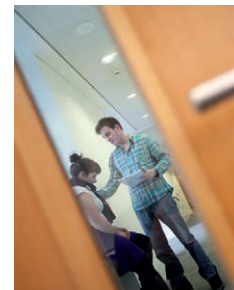
## NMC introduces new sanctions

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has introduced a range of different outcomes for fitness to practise cases.

Previously if case examiners decided there was a case to answer, registrants would be referred to a hearing. Now the NMC has five options when the first investigation is concluded:

- decide there is no case to answer
- write to a registrant with advice that's not published anywhere
- issue a warning and publish detail about the regulatory concern on the online NMC register for 12 months
- offer agreed measures, known as undertakings, to address areas of practice to be completed over a set period
- refer to a hearing.

Roz Hooper, RCN Head of Legal (Regulatory), said: "It's a new regime. We're very carefully reviewing it with the NMC. We want a fair system for registrants while offering public protection."



📞 If you need advice contact RCN Direct on **0345 772 6100**

## Ready for revalidation

Autumn sees a spike in nurses who are undergoing NMC revalidation. If it's the first time you've been through the process, or you just need some support, the RCN has a range of resources to help.

From tips on how to get ready for revalidation to simple explanations about what the process is, the RCN website can help bust myths and improve reflection.

To find out what's available, visit [www.rcn.org.uk/revalidation](http://www.rcn.org.uk/revalidation)





## Media buzz for Scrap the Cap

Scrap the Cap has been attracting media attention across the UK. As well as national and regional print and online articles, RCN spokespeople have been all over the TV and radio.

On 28 June an amendment to the Queen's Speech to end the cap on public sector pay was voted down by the Government and the RCN's response was featured across print and broadcast media. RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies was interviewed by LBC and BBC Radio 4's *The World Tonight*. Head of Employment Relations Josie Irwin spoke to Sky News and footage of the RCN protest outside the Department of Health the day before was used by BBC News at 10.

Figures released by the NMC on Monday 3 July showed the number of nurses and midwives leaving the profession has risen by 51% in just four years. Once again, Janet Davies' thoughts were broadcast by BBC Breakfast, ITV Lunchtime News, Channel 5 and Talkradio, while Josie Irwin made an appearance on the BBC Victoria Derbyshire programme.

RCN Wales Director Tina Donnelly responded to the comments of Welsh finance secretary Mark Drakeford, who said the public sector pay cap for workers in Wales should not be scrapped using Welsh Government money. She was interviewed by BBC Radio Wales and Sunday Politics Wales.

In the South West, Regional Director Jeannett Martin was interviewed by BBC South West about the devastating effects of the pay cap. She appeared on the lunchtime, early and late evening news.

## Scrap the Cap issues rally cry

RCN members, supporters, friends and family will make a stand in central London on 6 September and demand the Government scraps the pay cap once and for all



The rally, which takes place as parliament returns following the summer recess, is the largest event planned for the RCN Summer of Action.

The summer has already seen two pay day protests across more than 40 UK cities, as well as action at individual trusts and on social media.

Those wanting to participate in the rally can sign up to receive more details at [www.rcn.org.uk/pay-rally](http://www.rcn.org.uk/pay-rally) and members can apply to receive funding to help them attend the event. The more people able to attend, the more impact it will have.

While the rally takes place, MPs will also be invited to attend a drop in session at the Houses of Parliament. Politicians will be able to find out more about the

campaign and talk directly to members about the effects of the pay cap.

RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies said: "We're urging members and supporters to join us to demonstrate just how much scrapping the cap means. As the new Government returns to the House, it's the ideal time for them to take decisive action and show that they have listened to what nurses, the public and politicians have been saying all summer long."

Campaign supporters can visit the Scrap the Cap webpages for help on how to lobby their own MP and to take advantage of an easy-to-use email tool for contacting them.

You can also find out about more events in your area at [www.rcn.org.uk/scrapthecap](http://www.rcn.org.uk/scrapthecap)

# 4 DOING THE ROUNDS

## Proud on parade



RCN members join Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust LGBT Forum



It's good for the RCN to be on the side of its LGBT members

RCN members have been championing the LGBT community and highlighting the continuing need for equal access to care at Pride marches across the UK.

Alex Risorto joined the London parade. "I think it's good for the RCN to be seen as an inclusive organisation and on the side of its LGBT members," he says.

But while the message may be serious, the parades are all about fun. Alex says: "I like the social side of the Pride where people enjoy the music and each other's company."

In Wales, RCN rep Billy Nichols staffed the RCN stand at the inaugural Flintshire Pride.

"I think rural Pride events are even more important than those in cities, where there's already a big and visible LGBT community," he said. "Rural Pride events send a message of inclusivity to the community."

And Pride isn't just about being personally inclusive. From a nursing perspective every patient, service user, friend, family member and colleague must be treated with equality and respect.

Wendy Irwin, the RCN's diversity lead says: "Pride events are a great way to celebrate the LGBT community. But they're also a reminder that there's still work to do when it comes to equality."

"We know that trans people in particular are still having bad experiences in health care, so we need to harness the energy of Pride to drive change."

Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/proud](http://www.rcn.org.uk/proud) to discover how you can become an RCN diversity champion, join the RCN LGBT Network and download relevant publications.

## RCN goals

Chair of RCN Council Michael Brown is inviting footy fans to play in an RCN match in London on 28 September. Michael is looking for 20 volunteers of all ages, talents and genders to take on a formidable team of RCN staff.

If you'd like to put yourself forward, email Michael at [michael.brown@rcn.org.uk](mailto:michael.brown@rcn.org.uk) and let him know your preferred position, whether you have played before or not and whether you are right or left footed.

## International support

The RCN's Scrap the Cap campaign won international support from the Queensland Nurses and Midwives Union Annual Conference (QNMUAC) last month. A unanimously agreed emergency resolution stated: "On behalf of more than 58,000 nurse and midwife members, delegates to the 2017 QNMUAC in Australia send their support and solidarity to colleagues employed in the NHS in the UK. We fully support the endeavours of the RCN in your current Scrap the Cap campaign."



## The big picture



[www.parliamentlive.tv](http://www.parliamentlive.tv)

Jeremy Corbyn and Labour front benchers were spotted wearing RCN Scrap the Cap badges at Prime Minister's Questions in Parliament. Find out more about Scrap the Cap at [www.rcn.org.uk/scrapthecap](http://www.rcn.org.uk/scrapthecap)

## MEET THE MEMBER



Each month *RCN Bulletin* asks a member to share a little bit about themselves.

**Name:** Fadumo Indayare

**Role:** Student nurse

**Describe your job in three words:**  
Fulfilling, inspirational and challenging.

**What item can't you do without at work?** My little notebook. It's completely essential for keeping track of the work I'm doing as well as just making note of what I'm learning or need to look into. I go through those notebooks at quite a rate.

**How do you unwind?** After being in a hectic environment all day, I quite like to just spend some time by myself relaxing and watching things on my laptop.

**Why did you choose this profession?** I've always really liked children and wanted to pursue a career working with them. Nursing was a natural progression from that.

**What three things would you take to a desert island?** Really good quality shoes (always important!), my music and another person so I don't go crazy.

**If you could go back in time, which year would you live in?** I'd go back to when I was six years old. I just remember that age as being so carefree and fun.

[www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn](http://www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn)



## PATIENT PERSPECTIVE



Jacques Beriro has been married to his wife Liz for 44 years. Liz was diagnosed with dementia in 2015 at the age of 63. Here Jacques explains how he wouldn't have coped without the support of his specialist dementia nurse

“ My Admiral Nurse Jody Howie provided me with coping mechanisms and helped me to rationalise the feelings that I had. Jody put into perspective that it was the dementia that was causing these distressing changes in my wife Liz.

It was a slow process. I saw my Admiral Nurse every two weeks and

Jody's expertise, professionalism, empathy and understanding enabled me to better cope with my grief and adjust to losing the person that I loved.

Jody, working with us as a family, also helped us with the decision to move Liz into a care home in autumn 2016. It was a hard decision, but one that I felt supported in making.

Jody is also helping me understand Liz's medication and any reviews that need to be made. Medical reviews are vital because without the correct medication a person with dementia can develop new behaviour problems.

I'm still having regular appointments with Jody and I can contact her anytime. She is my lifeline.

ARE YOUR MEMBERSHIP DETAILS UP TO DATE?

CHECK ONLINE AT MYRCN, CALL 0345 7726 100, OR WRITE TO RCN MEMBERSHIP TEAM, COPSE WALK, CARDIFF GATE BUSINESS PARK, CARDIFF CF23 8XG.

## THE VIEW FROM HERE



### Ellen Nicholson

Learning rep, Inner North East London branch

Becoming active in the RCN was a gradual process for me, but I reached my tipping point when the Department of Health in England made a decision to close its Nursing Policy Unit. I couldn't believe the Government thought so little of nurses – a profession which had just been voted as the most trusted by the public. Why were they thinking so differently?

I joined in the College's campaign to reverse the decision and haven't looked back. Since then I've marched, written to my MP, lobbied at Westminster and more.

However, simple actions such as having a conversation shouldn't be underestimated. Just one short exchange can motivate a person to examine facts and ask questions.

Shortly after the general election was called, I chatted with a friend about the importance of reading parties' manifesto promises. I was delighted that when we next met she initiated the conversation and told me that she'd done just that – looked at the facts before her and decided to vote in a way that best represented her hopes and aspirations. Sharing messages is something we can all do with colleagues and friends.

You don't need to be a rep or a committee member to be active and you don't need to give up hours of your time. But, if you've reached your tipping point it's time to question, challenge and ask yourself: "What difference can I make?"

[www.rcn.org.uk/scrappthecap](http://www.rcn.org.uk/scrappthecap)



## What you've been saying

Twenty years ago as a mum of four young children with an unemployed husband, I did my nurse training. I could only do this because of the provision of the NHS bursary. If this had not been available, England would be one more nurse short.

My daughter is about to start her nurse training in September having worked for a few years as a carer. She will emerge in three years' time with an enormous debt and a salary scarcely big enough to justify its repayment.

With the shortage of nurses set to become worse in the next few years as the older generation, such as myself, retires, and the influx of nurses from abroad reduces due to Brexit, how can the Government not see scrapping the bursary is a really bad idea? Teachers and doctors are given financial incentives to train, why not nurses?

We are fortunate indeed that, despite the circumstances of their training, there are still young (and not so young) people who are committed enough to want to be nurses.

Julie Greenacre, via email

I would like to say I agree with the comment about recognising HCAs (*RCN Bulletin*, opinion, July issue).

We now do a lot more work and a lot of us have NVQs which we worked hard to do for two years. In fact, the NVQ3 level is what the enrolled nurses used to do to enter nursing, but we do it with a lot less pay and many HCAs are fed up with not being treated as an equal part of the team.

Heather Strange, via email



### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Driving students away from nursing is a spectacular act of political self-harm."

Guardian newspaper columnist Polly Toynbee on the news that nurse training applications are down 23% this year

### 4 THINGS TO DO IN AUGUST

1. Sign up for the central London Scrap the Cap rally on 6 September  
[www.rcn.org.uk/scrappthecap](http://www.rcn.org.uk/scrappthecap)
2. Save up to 10% on holiday bookings with RCN Xtra – exclusive discounts for RCN members for all kinds of things from shopping to travel  
[www.rcn.org.uk/xtra](http://www.rcn.org.uk/xtra)
3. Reps are essential to the work of the RCN. Find out what they do and be inspired to do it yourself by watching RCN steward Alex's story  
[www.rcn.org.uk/become-a-rep](http://www.rcn.org.uk/become-a-rep)
4. Check out the RCN's latest guidance and publications  
[www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications)

### GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

The *RCN Bulletin* team is always looking for members to contribute to the opinion pages. If you're keen to share your views, email [bulletin@rcn.org.uk](mailto:bulletin@rcn.org.uk)

## HOT TOPIC



At a joint RCN Twitter chat with the NMC, we asked people what additional skills nurses of the future would need by 2030 to be prepared for registration.

**Dr Stephen McKeever** opened the chat by saying: "As patient complexity increases, nurses will need to have increased understanding within their speciality." Contributors flagged mental health and learning disability nursing as important specialist areas, but **WeGPNs** said: "We need expert generalists too!" and **Derek T Barron** suggested that understanding co-morbidities would be key. "It's rare to care for someone with only one thing wrong," he said.

**Rachel Major** was keen to underline the need for "a clear understanding that people fit into a wider social context and are not just a condition to be treated." The fundamentals of

nursing care would still be needed, agreed **I Smith** commenting: "I think as nursing and patient care become more complex, we still have the skills to be kind and compassionate."

**Anthea Travis** expressed concern that learning should cover more than hospital care. "I feel current skills asked at pre-registration are very ward based and difficult to achieve in community-based settings," she said. **Gill Coverdale** suggested that students need "exposure and time to follow the patient through the journey in all settings."

When it came to specific skills, participants were mostly in agreement that prescribing should be a post-registration qualification. **Hellomynameisdani** said: "It's a lot to take on. And remember being newly qualified is daunting enough without added pressure."

## MESSAGE TO MEMBERS



**Janet Davies**  
RCN Chief Executive

Once again our pay day protests were impossible to miss thanks to members who took to the streets across the UK. And our hard work is paying off with more and more politicians suggesting they would support ending the pay cap.

This month I've spent much of my time backing up our visible campaigning with some behind the scenes lobbying. As well as meeting with Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt, I've spoken to nurse and Conservative MP Maria Caulfield, Shadow Public Health Minister Sharon Hodgson, SNP health spokesperson Dr Philippa Whitford and Chair of the Health Select Committee Dr Sarah Wollaston. The College also held a breakfast event where I met with Welsh MPs.

Some members ask me why we bother to talk to all the different parties. It's simple really; we need to persuade everyone of our point of view, not just those who already agree with us.

I look forward to engaging with more MPs when Parliament returns after its summer break. We've already arranged a drop-in session at Westminster for politicians to find out more about our campaign.

It's so important for us to keep up the pressure.

Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/scrapthecap](http://www.rcn.org.uk/scrapthecap) for more details.



## Thinking digitally

Matt Butler is the Chair of the RCN eHealth Forum. The forum is behind the RCN's "every nurse an eNurse" programme and has recently worked with Health Education England to produce *Improving Digital Literacy*

Digital technology is ubiquitous. We know that when it comes to health care, technology can frustrate nurses, sometimes even hindering them in their jobs. Experience also tells us that clumsily implemented health technology projects, where there has been little clinical involvement or consultation, can end up underdelivering and frustrating other clinicians, staff and patients too.

But it doesn't have to be that way. As well as training in proper use, we need a workforce that is involved in the design, development and deployment of technology for health care. These are the overall aims of "every nurse an eNurse" – to

promote nursing as a central profession in contributing to the ongoing development of eHealth, so the potential benefits can be felt for all.



eHealth affords us new capabilities. The use of patient apps, for example, unleashes a massive amount of data with valuable clinical uses. The nursing profession is uniquely placed to make use of this innovation for human benefit. "Every nurse an eNurse" aims to inspire nurses, encouraging critical involvement of the profession so that the true benefits of eHealth can be more fully realised.

Follow the eHealth Forum on Twitter  
[@RCNeHealth](https://twitter.com/RCNeHealth)

# Payday protests continue

Members and supporters marked the second NHS pay day of the Summer of Protest with more protests across the UK. Here are just a few of the Scrap the Cap events from 27 July.



### ◀ London

In the capital, a large demonstration joined RCN President Cecilia Anim outside Downing Street. Speakers included Eastenders actor Maddy Hill, who said “I want you all to know, that we appreciate what you do more and more each day.”



### ▲ Southampton

Southampton's historic Bargate was the location for the South East Region's candlelit protest.

### ▼ Exeter

The magic money tree was in attendance in the South West Region, where town centre visitors were asked to add missing leaves in the form of messages to the Government.



### ▲ Cambridge

Members were joined by the missing 'ninth nurse' representing nursing vacancies in England, which currently stand at one in nine.

◀ RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies was also on hand to speak to the media.





▲ **Blackpool**

Blackpool Tower was lit up in support of the campaign as members and Oakley the dog gathered to demand an end to the pay cap.



◀ **Nottingham**  
Nottingham MP Alex Norris addressed crowds at the city's Speaker's Corner.



▼ **Gateshead**  
The Angel of the North watched over Northern Region picnickers as they staged a peaceful protest over sandwiches.



◀ **West Bromwich**

Protesters got vocal at Sandwell Hospital.

▼ **Sheffield**

Visitors to Weston Park in Sheffield filled out Scrap the Cap postcards which will be forwarded to their MPs.



## Welcome diversions

Nursing is a demanding profession and being able to switch off is an important part of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Sarah Abley speaks to four members about how they take a break



Yemi in mayor's garb

It may not seem the obvious choice for a relaxing pastime, but member Yemi Osho has recently been elected Mayor of Waltham Forest. Following three years as a local councillor, Yemi says: "It was a moment of excitement and huge privilege that fellow councillors believed in me for this level of leadership. When I put on the chain and robes for the first time I was so proud of my achievement, especially as a woman from an ethnic minority background."

Her duties include leading council meetings and representing the borough's 300,000 residents. She's also required at civic engagements and thinks she may have been photographed more in the last two months as mayor than in the rest of her life put together.

While her schedule is jam-packed, Yemi says that her experience of nursing stands her in good stead for managing her time and ensuring she gets some rest. And being mayor provides a

healthy break from her role as an advanced nurse practitioner.

She's determined to spend her year in office representing underprivileged people. "I was attracted to being a politician so that I could use my knowledge of health to not only lobby for good quality care, but to support people's whole wellbeing," she says.

### Creative goals

First-year nursing student Gino D'Andrea wanted to find a creative outlet in his life and before long found himself pitch-side at Wembley.

"I bought a cheap second hand camera, went along to my local professional women's football team and took pictures from the stands," explains Gino. "But when I posted them on Instagram the whole thing just blew up. I got 1,000 new followers with players and their families following me too."

The club was Chelsea Ladies and they were so impressed with the photos, they offered Gino official photographer accreditation in return for using them in their publicity.

In 2016, it took him to the touchline of the Women's FA Cup final between Chelsea and Arsenal. He's also made prints and canvasses of his work for players.

"Fitting it in with nursing is all about handling expectations," he says. "I don't take on too much and time management is key."

### On the right track

Colin Burgess comes from a railway family, and for him volunteering on the Ffestiniog steam railway in Wales carries on the tradition, as well as indulging his passion for engineering.

"I do a bit of everything," says Colin. "I maintain and install the signalling



A different challenge stimulates your brain



Gino in action... from behind the lens

GINO D'ANDREA



*All aboard! Colin in his element*

systems and enjoy finding solutions to engineering problems – I've usually got something in my toolbox that will help."

Colin takes the occasional turn in the driver's seat, but he's happiest when faced with 'spaghetti junction', the name he gives the complicated wiring of the signalling system.

"Some people are lucky that they can just switch off after work. I find keeping my mind occupied with something irrelevant to the day job helps to give you a break from it – and that's good advice for anyone who needs to find a way to relax.

"A different challenge stimulates your brain so that you don't dwell on what else might have happened that day or week."

### Stage and screen

Charlotte Hall finds her escape with TV, film and theatre, but not in the audience. She has been taking on acting extra work since before she began her nursing degree.

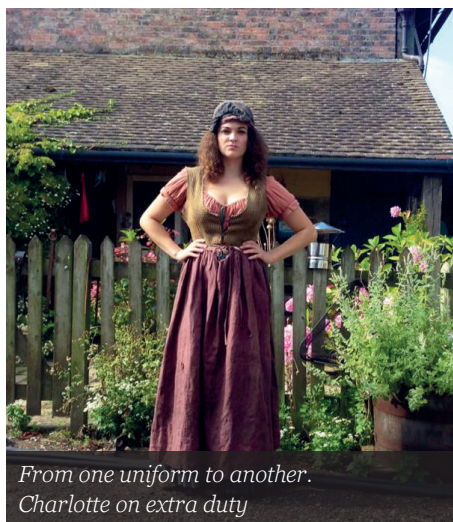
"I was a wench in Poldark," she says. "I met Aidan Turner (Ross Poldark) and he was very nice, which was a pleasant surprise because they're not always!"

It's not necessarily glamorous work though. "I was working on the period drama Two Worlds and had to play a

victim of a shipwreck. It was set on a tropical beach, but we were actually lying in the sea in Wales in November. I had a wetsuit on under my dress, but it was freezing," she recalls.

Charlotte has made appearances in numerous TV shows and films, but says her true emotional outlet is theatre.

"If you need to express yourself, theatre is key. Being someone else for the day gives a bit of relief and separates you from everyday stresses. Every year I do panto and it makes me feel so happy. Anyone can have a go, you don't have to be professional."



*From one uniform to another.  
Charlotte on extra duty*

## THE VIEW FROM HERE



**Andy Walton**  
Blogger and mental health nurse

The importance of developing a healthy balance of daily activities seems obvious but it's the simple things that can often fall by the wayside when struggling with stress from work.

As nurses we spend all day thinking about the wellbeing of others, but if we're not being self-aware and taking a step back to reflect, we will struggle with our own wellbeing and performance.

It sounds like a straightforward consideration but, as we all know, after a busy shift summoning the energy and enthusiasm to engage in anything else that day can seem futile. But we need balance as it's our daily habits that have the most effect on wellbeing.

With a constant barrage of distressing news events, social media and work pressures vying for our attention, the need to safeguard our leisure time is more important than ever. We need time to fully switch off from distraction and immerse ourselves in thinking outwardly, doing enjoyable and absorbing activities.

Taking you away from thinking inwardly, hobbies help you forget worries, find calm, connect with others and, in turn, boost your mood. And yes, it sounds easier said than done, but remember putting energy into enjoyable activities gives you energy in return. So just do something knowing it's in the best interest of you and your patients.

[www.nowandafterwards.com](http://www.nowandafterwards.com)



## Working on the open water

What's it like to be a nurse aboard a cruise ship, sailing around the world while you work? Leah Williams finds out from someone who knows first hand



Member Carole Tracey certainly doesn't shy away from adventure. From working in A&E and setting up private travel clinics to working in a two-person nurse team in the depths of the Australian outback, she's not afraid to test her limits. Her latest nursing venture has been travelling the world as part of a medical team aboard Fred Olsen cruise ships. Sounds like a dream job, perhaps? But life as a cruise ship nurse isn't always plain sailing.

"The majority of the work is primary care with your usual minor illnesses and injuries and occasionally norovirus. However, when something more significant happens, you have to be able to handle that too," Carole says.

"We have to deal with trauma, heart attacks, strokes and anything else that happens to come our way. There's no one else there to turn to when you're in the middle of the ocean so you have

to have a solid medical team and each individual needs to be very confident of their own abilities."

Working as a nurse on a cruise ship can be very autonomous. Nurses are the first to respond to any calls for medical assistance and it's vital to have strong clinical assessment skills. Having worked in intensive care, A&E or a medical assessment unit is a big plus and will supply you with the right experience to feel confident working on a cruise ship.

As with all nursing, there's an element of organisation and crisis management too. Of course, there's often outside help available for serious emergencies as well.

"We usually have to repatriate or airlift out at least one person on every cruise. We also have to liaise a lot with local medical services at each port to arrange for specialist referrals, X-rays,

blood tests, and, of course, prescription medicine. You'd be surprised how many people come away without their prescriptions."

It's not all medical emergencies and long hours – there are plenty of benefits too. Working in this type of unique setting will not only help hone your nursing skills but offers the opportunity to experience many top destinations across the globe. Where of all the places in the world has Carole most enjoyed?

"The Norwegian fjords are just magical. I love it there and I'm keen to go further north as well to hopefully see the Northern lights."

So, would she recommend it to other nurses looking to expand their experience? Yes, but having worked on several different ships, Carole is quick to point out that it's about finding the right fit for you. "The ships I work on are some of the smaller ones and this is what I really like about them. There's a really nice, family feel which made me feel at ease from the first moment I stepped aboard."

Each company will offer different salary packages and time off structure as well. Some pay a flat-rate salary whether you're on board or on your break, whereas others might offer additional bonus schemes but with no pay for time on dry land so it's worth doing your research beforehand.

If you're interested in finding a new direction for your career, visit [www.rcn.org.uk/careers](http://www.rcn.org.uk/careers) for inspiration and advice.



There is no one else to turn to when you're in the middle of the ocean

# Fighting FGM

New statistics on female genital mutilation reveal numbers aren't falling fast enough, making the role of school nurses and other health care professionals more vital than ever

For some, the summer holidays are a time of freedom and excitement, but for many other girls and young women, it can end up being a traumatic and life-changing time. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is illegal in the UK and can carry a jail sentence of up to 14 years. However, this doesn't seem to be slowing down the practice, as revealed by recent statistics.

NHS England recorded 5,391 new cases of FGM over the past year, only a very slight decrease from the 6,080 cases recorded the previous year.

Wendy Preston, Head of Nursing Practice at the RCN, says: "FGM is child abuse, and these statistics show that, despite the rhetoric, the number of women and girls subjected to it is not falling fast enough."

Although the average age recorded was 31, most of these women had undergone FGM before the age of 18. While it's encouraging to see these women accessing health care services for after-care, the key to decreasing case numbers is to prevent FGM from happening in the first place. School nurses especially play a fundamental role



FGM is  
child abuse



in tackling this issue – but with funding and numbers decreasing, their ability to make a difference is being jeopardised.

"School nurses play a vital role in both educating children and young women and spotting those who may be at risk," Wendy adds. "The Government must act to

attract and retain school nurses to help address the problem at grassroots level and maintain momentum in the fight to eradicate FGM."

View the full NHS report on last year's recorded FGM cases at: [digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB30015](https://digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB30015)

## Not all scars are visible

Joanne Buckley, RCN Women's Health Forum member, presented an update on FGM at this year's Women's Health conference with particular emphasis on the mental health implications. She said: "The trauma of undergoing FGM can not only have serious physical effects, but can also lead to mental health problems, including flashbacks, PTSD, anxiety and depression. The data shows that awareness amongst NHS staff is improving and women continue to access services."

## Guidance for school nurses to identify girls at risk

- Be sensitive but ask clear and direct questions about FGM – whether they know about it or whether they have any siblings or family members who have undergone procedures.
- Be aware of other terms for FGM, such as "sunna" or "cut" for example.
- Familiarise yourself with the cultural backgrounds and risk potential of girls you care for – although you should assume all girls are at risk as there may be different heritage backgrounds that aren't necessarily obvious.
- Ask about summer holiday plans. Things to be wary of are long holidays "home" accompanied by a female relative or unknown relatives visiting from abroad.
- Take note of any mention of special ceremonies or occasions where they will "become a woman" or prepare for marriage.
- Look out for behavioural signs such as depression or being withdrawn and evasive when questioned.

Access RCN guidance and professional resources for tackling FGM at: [www.rcn.org.uk/fgm](http://www.rcn.org.uk/fgm)

## Celebrating professional forums

A new project is set to celebrate and develop the industry-leading and innovative work of RCN forums

The Valuing Forums project is set to highlight the valuable work forums do and make sure members can get involved in their professionalism.

Over the next two years work will be done to ensure the forums have all the resources and support they need to reach full potential.

Wendy Preston, Head of Nursing at the RCN, said: “The forums represent a huge area of influence and direction for the RCN and offer the opportunity to connect with specialist colleagues from across the UK to share best practice and discuss key nursing issues. This project will allow them

to really flourish; we’re excited about the future of the forums.”

The project kicked off at Congress in May this year, with a stand that promoted the fantastic work the RCN professional forums do and invited RCN members to get involved. With member numbers consistently growing – there are currently 193,680 members across all forums – the influential power of the forums also continues to thrive.

Head to [www.rcn.org.uk/forums](http://www.rcn.org.uk/forums) to find your forum and join a growing network of expert nurses. Forum Facebook groups are also a great place for informal discussion and networking.



## MenACWY vaccine vital to save student lives

The dangers of meningitis are an all-too-current reality, and the RCN Public Health Forum is highlighting the need to vaccinate young people against all strains.

With the summer holidays underway and the excitement of leaving home and heading to university at the forefront of their minds, school leavers are unlikely to be thinking about vaccinations.

The Public Health Forum is keen to remind all health care professionals and education bodies, however, that this is a time to be vigilant.

Over the last few years in the UK there has been a rapid increase



**It's essential that all health care professionals are actively promoting this vaccine**

in the W strain of meningococcal disease. This strain is particularly dangerous as it doesn't always present itself with the more commonly recognised symptoms, which can sometimes result in a delay in diagnosis leading to life-changing disabilities or even death.

Forum Chair Jason Warriner said: “Meningitis can have devastating consequences and, especially with the current prevalence of the W strain, it's essential that all health care professionals are actively promoting this vaccine.”

In the two years since the new MenACWY vaccine (which has

replaced the MenC vaccine to cover all four strains) was rolled out, it has only had a worrying 39% uptake.

Teenagers and young adults are the most likely to be carriers of the bacteria and, although they may not necessarily contract the disease themselves, it is easily spread from person to person. It is vital that these young people are being encouraged to protect themselves and others by having the vaccination as soon as possible.

Guidance on the prevention and management of meningitis in higher education can be found at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) – search for publication number 2016383.

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT



### Learning Disability Nursing Forum

#### Who's the Chair?

Simon Jones, Head of Behavioural Support: Nurse Consultant at Lifeways Group, who has been a member of the forum for seven years and became Chair 18 months ago.

#### Recent highlights?

*The Needs of People with Learning Disabilities*. Intended mainly as guidance for student nurses on caring for patients with learning disabilities, the publication has been well received as an essential aid for all nursing staff. It offers advice and best practice on topics such as communication, reasonable adjustments and lifespan.

#### What's next?

A summit discussing the use of assisted technology to increase independence and quality of life for people with learning disabilities is in the pipeline. The forum will play a vital role in identifying good practice,



looking at resources already out there and introducing new systems of use.

#### Why join?

Simon says: "Most nursing staff get into the profession to make a difference. Joining a forum can help you to do even more in the wider industry and actually influence nursing practice and Government policy. It's also nice to have a support network as being a learning disability nurse can be quite a solitary job at times."

Find out more about the Learning Disability Nursing Forum at [www.rcn.org.uk/forums](http://www.rcn.org.uk/forums) or visit their Facebook page.

## WHAT I'M THINKING



### Debbie Quinn RCN Neuroscience Forum committee member

I recently gave a keynote speech at a national epilepsy conference about the future of specialist nursing.

One of the main things I spoke about, and that's particularly relevant in today's pay and funding crisis, is how essential it has become for specialist nurses to be able to defend the impact of their work.

We are an easy target as specialist nurses: high pay grades and often difficult-to-identify results. When trusts are looking to save money, our services can be the first to get cut.

Across a lot of specialties, but certainly in neuroscience, many of the conditions we treat are long-term. There is no quick win and it can be easy for trusts to look in from the outside and fail to see the value.

To guarantee the future of specialist nursing, we all need to be keeping track of the important work we do, noting down impacts – both immediate and projected future ones – that can act as concrete evidence of what we do.

Of course, for all nursing staff time is a precious commodity. Looking long-term though, this kind of record-keeping is time well spent.

It could end up being the difference that guarantees the future of the service you provide as a specialist nurse.

[www.rcn.org.uk/forums](http://www.rcn.org.uk/forums)



## In the picture

The RCN image library is an important resource for RCN communication materials and publications. To capture the full breadth of membership, it's important to have a bank of images that represents diverse nursing settings and roles. To continue building this database, the communications team is asking forum members for photo shoot venue suggestions and volunteers. They'll help you with obtaining permission and ensure confidentiality is observed as appropriate.

As they say, a picture paints a thousand words. So if you'd like to see your forum represented in the RCN image library then please contact [emma.jones@rcn.org.uk](mailto:emma.jones@rcn.org.uk)

## Expert voices

The RCN press office is always keen to hear from forum members who would like to speak out as an expert in their field. It's a great way to raise the profile of your forum's work and also to reaffirm the RCN as the voice of nursing.

Judy Evans from the RCN Midwifery Forum was recently featured on the Health Awareness website discussing the growing complexities of maternal health in today's society.

You can read what she said at [tinyurl.com/ybmjm4hx](http://tinyurl.com/ybmjm4hx)

If you would be happy to speak to the media, please contact the RCN press office at [press.office@rcn.org.uk](mailto:press.office@rcn.org.uk)

# 16 EVENTS

For details of more events visit the region and country pages of the RCN website or go to [www.rcn.org.uk/events](http://www.rcn.org.uk/events)

RCN Northern Ireland

## Mental capacity workshops



**24 and 31 August**  
**9.30am-12.30pm**  
RCN Northern Ireland  
17 Windsor Avenue  
Belfast BT9 6EE

These free morning workshops are aimed at RCN members who are registered nurses, student nurses and health care assistants. They will be useful for those who work outside mental health or learning disability services, as well as those staff who work with legislation on a regular basis. The workshops will help participants to understand

their professional and legal roles and responsibilities in terms of the Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. The safeguards within the legislation are about lack of capacity, not mental illness, and the rest of the world is looking to Northern Ireland to lead the way in safeguarding people who lack the capacity to make decisions about their care. The workshops are also an opportunity to help shape the Code of Practice by developing example scenarios which explain the intricacies of the act.

☎ Call 02890 384600 with your full name, RCN membership number and the date you wish to attend.

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