

RCN Critical Care and Flight Nursing Conference 2025

Care in the air: Navigating the patient journey



Saturday 29 March 2025

RCN HQ, London

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Welcome letter

Dear Colleague,

On behalf of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and forum, we welcome to RCN Critical Care and Flight Nursing Conference 2025.

We trust that you will find the conference stimulating and informative and that you'll have an opportunity to network with colleagues during the course of the event. We hope you will go away feeling inspired and invigorated and armed with information to share with colleagues in your workplace.

The RCN believes in life-long learning and actively promotes the continuing professional development of nurses. For this reason, certificates of attendance are included in the conference pack and the framework for reflection can be found on the reverse. You are encouraged to contribute attendance at RCN events towards your framework for reflection which can be included in your portfolio.

You will receive an email with a link to the online conference evaluation. We'd be grateful if you would complete this as soon as possible and within seven days of the conference. Your comments and feedback are invaluable in helping us plan future RCN conferences.

RCN staff and committee members are also on hand to answer any queries you may have regarding your membership. Or if you're a non-member, they can inform you of the many benefits of joining the RCN. As a member, you can join any number of the RCN Forums. Forums have active Facebook groups that provide you with the opportunity to connect with colleagues and keep up to date on current practice related issues.

The RCN has professional forums across the diverse nursing arena and RCN members can join as many of these forums as they wish. With 202105 forum members, forum membership is set to continue to rise. Forums are a huge area of influence and direction for the RCN and are a valuable opportunity to network with colleagues around the UK and be involved in:

- consultation responses
- conferences, events and workshops
- forum-led publications.

We'd like to thank you for supporting this conference and look forward to welcoming you back to future RCN events. A full listing of future events can be found on page 26 of your conference programme.

With best wishes,

Ciara Collins, Forum Chair – Critical Care and Flight Nursing

Programme at a glance

9.00	Registration, exhibition, networking and refreshments
10.00	Chair's opening remarks Ciara Collins, Chair – RCN Critical Care and Flight Nursing Forum
10.15	The role of the medical case manager – how does it all start? Kim Hoolahan, Medical Team Manager, CEGA Group
10.45	Commercial Aircraft Medical Escort vs Air Ambulance – What is the difference? Adam Booth, Company Director, Repatriation Medical Services Ltd Advanced Paramedic Practitioner, South East Coast Ambulance Service
11.15	Refreshments, networking and exhibition viewing
11.45	Clinical considerations for decision making Clare Whelan, Team Leader, Healix
12.15	RCN Indemnity – how are flight nurses covered? Lucy Catterall, Head of Legal (Regulatory Policy), RCN
12.30	MedAire – MedLink: The role of the Global Response Centre Emma Bibby, Deputy Nurse Manager, MedAire at International SOS
13.00	Lunch, networking and exhibition viewing
14.00	Air Ambulance Insights: Piloting the King Air B200 Jason Flanagan, Captain TRI B200 Kingair, Gama Aviation Terry Knights, Captain Kingair B200, Gama Aviation
14.30	Roles and responsibilities of the flight nurse Rachel Benbow, European Chief Nursing Officer, International Medical Group
15.00	Refreshments, networking and exhibition
15.30	An introduction to aeromedical evacuation in the Royal Air Force Rebecca Kinsey, RAF reservist FS Wendy Finbow-Wright, SNCO Flight Nurse, Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, RAF Brize Norton
16.00	Discussion platform Kerryn McGowran, Director of Nursing - Assistance - Europe, Middle East and Africa, International SOS Kim Hoolahan, Medical Team Manager, CEGA Group Rachel Benbow, European Chief Nursing Officer, International Medical Group Rebecca Kinsey, RAF reservist
16.20	Closing remarks Ciara Collins, Chair – RCN Critical Care and Flight Nursing Forum
16.30	Conference close

General information

Conference enquiries

Please ask staff on the registration desk if you have any specific requirements regarding access, lost property or have queries regarding your membership.

Delegate Badges

For security purposes, participants must wear their badges at all times. Participants will not be admitted to the conference sessions without the appropriate badge.

Programme

Please refer to the programme for details of the times and locations of all conference sessions. Staff will be on hand to guide you as necessary.

Exhibition

There is an exhibition running alongside this event. These exhibitors have chosen to exhibit at this conference as they feel their products and/or services may be of interest to you. The exhibition also supports the conference, therefore please take the time to go and visit each exhibition stand during the exhibition viewing times.

Receipts

If you require a receipt or have any queries relating to your registration or payment for this event, please contact staff on the registration desk at the event. Alternatively, receipts are also available by contacting RCN Event Registrations direct on 029 2054 6460 between 9.00am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

Specific requirements

Please ask at the registration/enquiries desk if you have any specific requirements (e.g. dietary, accessibility etc.)

Electronic devices

Out of courtesy to others, delegates are requested to switch off or set to silent all electronic devices during conference sessions.

Liability

The RCN will not accept any liability for loss or damage to personal effects which may arise as a result of attendance at this event.

Continuing Professional Development

The Royal College of Nursing believes in lifelong learning and actively promotes the continuing professional development of all nurses. Authorised Royal College of Nursing certificates of attendance have been issued to all participants. This event is also subject to the RCN Events quality assurance framework. You should log what you have learnt at this event using the Framework for Reflection guidelines on the back of your certificate and keep this document in your personal professional portfolio.

Free information at your fingertips

The Royal College of Nursing offers a number of FREE online resources with all the latest information and guidance on particular nursing practice issues such as: clinical guidelines, patient safety and eHealth. Visit <http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/practice> for more information.

Media partner

RCNi is the premier provider of innovative and creative information solutions for the whole nursing team and associated health professionals. With 11 nursing journals, including Nursing Standard, RCNi provide health professionals with the latest developments impacting nursing, including changes in policy, practice and research. RCNi also offer a range of digital products including RCNi Learning, an interactive online resource of CPD training modules, and the RCNi Portfolio, an online store and tracking system to help you with revalidation.



National conference partner

LV= General Insurance, one of the UK's largest personal lines insurers, pride themselves in putting customers at the heart of all they do. RCN members can benefit from exclusive* discounts and savings on a range of LV= insurance products, including Car and Home insurance, for a quote and more information visit LV.com/RCN.

*Exclusive RCN member discount vs general public prices on lv.com and through the call centre



Acknowledgement and thanks

RCN Critical Care and Flight Nursing Forum

Ciara Collins Critical Care Matron - Harefield Hospital, Heart Lung and
Critical Care Clinical Group GSTT Foundation Trust (Chair)

Sara Walsh Chief Critical Care Flight Nurse and Clinical Services
Manager - Gama Aviation

Suman Shrestha Professional Lead for Critical Care, RCN

Ambassadors

Dawn Heeger Flight Nurse, Healix International Ltd

Lauren Hall Medical Case Manager and Flight Nurse, Healix

Plenary speaker abstracts

Kim Hoolahan, Medical Team Manager, Cega/Charles Taylor

Talk title: The role of the Medical Case Manager

Summary

- 1: Brief biography of how I came to be Manager of 23 medical nurse case managers and 9 doctors.
- 2: Facts and figures of the medical team and number of repatriations in 2024
- 3: What we do in the office: Medical calls. Authorising procedures. Challenging hospitals if needed. Setting up repatriations. Calls to patients to answer queries. Booking UK beds. Assessing insurance cover.
- 4: The qualities and experience needed to be a medical case manager: Broad range of medical knowledge. ICU and ED preferred. Ability to multitask. Ability to prioritise. Great work ethic. Team player. Empathy for patients/relatives away from their usual support network. Clear and logical thought processes when assessing insurance cover.
- 5: The challenges of the role. Keeping our patients safe in areas with inadequate medical facilities. Obtaining information from overseas medical staff. Overcoming language barriers. Awareness that the travel companion may also be vulnerable. Obtaining UK beds at a time when the NHS is struggling with capacity. Dealing with multiple insurance companies with often very different stances

Learning outcomes

1. What the role of the office nurse involves.
2. The qualities and experience needed to become a good medical case manager.
3. The challenges of the role.

Recommended reading list / references

1. Handbook of aviation and space medicine. IATA medical manual.
Aeromedical Transportation: A Clinical Guide. Terry Martin

Biography

Kim Hoolahan qualified as an RGN in 1981 at the Middlesex Hospital in London. After working in operating theatres and gynaecology, she worked in the ICU at the National Hospital for Nervous diseases, Queens Square, where she took her ENB 100 course. Kim then worked in ICU's in Saudi Arabia and Australia, returning to the UK and working as flight/office nurse and ICU nurse in Portsmouth. This included ventilated/ ICU repatriations in air ambulances as well as commercial repatriations. Kim was then promoted to a managerial position and is now medical team manager for 23 nurses and 9 doctors.

Adam Booth, Company Director / Advanced Paramedic Practitioner, Repatriation Medical Services Ltd/ South East Coast Ambulance Service

Talk title: Commercial aircraft medical escort vs Air ambulance

Summary

What is the difference, kit, stretcher, patient comfort.

Learning outcomes

1. The difference between the two types of repatriation.
2. Pro's and con's.
3. Overall best decision for the patient along with financial considerations.

Biography

Adam qualified as RGN in 2004 at Brighton University, during his training he worked as a HCA in the emergency department at Eastbourne district general hospital. On completion he worked as a Staff Nurse in the same department, becoming experienced in all aspects of emergency/urgent care. In 2006 he joined the South East Coast Ambulance Service (Secamb) as part of a pilot program to bring other healthcare professionals into the role of Emergency Care Practitioner, with an aim to reduce hospital admissions and conveyance by ambulance crews. He completed his autonomous practitioner (now the Advanced Paramedic Practitioner) training at St. Georges University, London, this enabled him to gain a great deal of experience working in the pre hospital environment supporting staff both on the road and remotely from the control room, Adam also enjoyed training new staff as a mentor. He was then offered to commence his Paramedic training so he could become dual registered, this was completed at St. Georges University, London. He still works for Secamb on a regular basis. For the past 10 years Adam has been involved in the assistance industry, from remote support to personally completing repatriations worldwide, gaining a broad understanding of all aspects involved in the complexities related to planning a safe repatriation. In 2023 Adam setup his own company Repatriation Medical Services with Georgie who is an active NHS ICU Nurse and part of the RCN forum for critical care and flight nursing.

Clare Whelan, Team Leader, Healix

Talk title: Clinical Considerations for Decision Making

Summary

Effective clinical decision making is critical throughout the medical case management process—from the initial assessment through to case resolution. Clinical decisions evolve as cases develop, influenced by emerging information

and changes in a patient's condition. This dynamic environment highlights the excitement and variability inherent in our work. In this session, attendees will explore case studies that illustrate the decision-making process at various stages of patient care. The presentation will detail the multitude of factors that influence clinical choices and provide strategies to navigate complex cases.

Learning outcomes

1. Introduce the clinical decision-making process throughout a patient's journey home.
2. Understand and analyse the complexities of international case management

Recommended reading

International Air Transport Association (IATA) Guidelines

Biography

Clare Whelan graduated from University of Liverpool in 2010 and gained experience in Accident & Emergency from various Northwest hospitals. She completed a Diploma in Tropical Nursing at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine before volunteering in Costa Rica and Nicaragua as a field medic for Raleigh International. She started her career at Healix International as an ad hoc flight nurse in 2015 before joining as a medical case manager in 2016. She has been a Team Leader since 2019 and oversees a team of nurses and coordinators managing medical care and evacuations for patients unwell away from home.

Lucy Catterall, Head of Legal (Regulatory Policy), RCN

Talk title: Flight Nurse Indemnity

Summary

My presentation will focus on:

- What indemnity is;
- Vicarious liability and provision of indemnity;
- RCN Indemnity Scheme

Learning outcomes

- Identify the regime under which they are indemnified
- Understand the key components of a clinical negligence claim

Recommended reading

RCN Indemnity Scheme

Biography

Lucy Catterall is a qualified solicitor who has worked at the RCN for 21 years. She has been in her current role as Head of Legal for three years. She also heads up the RCN's Indemnity Scheme. Lucy's legal expertise is in regulatory law which is one of the two main specialisms provided to RCN members by the RCN's in-house legal team, the other being employment law.

Emma Bibby, Deputy Nurse Manager, MedAire (International SOS)

Talk title: MedAire – MedLink: The role of the Global Response Centre

Summary

The session will cover - what is MedAire/MedLink and the nurses role within the Global Response Centre. The aim is for the audience to have a better understanding of MedAire, how they can work with us and utilise us in their various roles as flight nurses.

Learning outcomes

1. Understand MedAire, MedLink and International SOS
2. Explore the function of the Assistance Centre/Global Response Centres and our Global Capabilities
3. Outline the role of our Coordinating Nurses and wider Multi-Disciplinary Team

Recommended reading list / references

1. Joan Sullivan Garrett - One Life Lost, Millions Gained

Biography

Emma is the Deputy Nurse Manager MedAire, based in London International SOS Assistance Centre. Emma started this role in early 2023 when MedAire expanded to London. Prior to that she was working as a Coordinating Nurse for International SOS. Emma maintained her clinical practice in Guys and St Thomas Intensive Care Units, where she was working prior to commencing her role in International SOS in December 2020. Emma has worked across acute medical care and intensive care throughout her career as a nurse and thrived in these busy/fast-paced environments, applying this experience to the wider medical needs of aviation and maritime.

Jason Flanagan, Captain TRI B200 Kingair, Gama Aviation
Terry Knights, Captain Kingair B200, Gama Aviation

Talk title: Air Ambulance Insights: Piloting the King Air B200 at Gama Aviation

Summary

This session provides insights into the unique experiences of air ambulance pilots operating the King Air B200, contrasting these with the airline industry. It covers the distinct responsibilities, challenges, and skills required.

Learning outcomes

1. Describe the operational differences between air ambulance and airline piloting.
2. Explain the skills and decision-making required for air ambulance missions.
3. Compare the lifestyle and career pathways in both fields

Biographies

- Jason Flanagan is a highly qualified Captain and TRI on the King Air B200, with a focus on Air Ambulance operations. Accumulating over 3000 hours as pilot in command, he has successfully managed numerous repatriation missions across Europe in the Commercial Aviation sector. His leadership is evident in both single-pilot and multi-crew environments, where he demonstrates strong crisis management and decision-making skills. At Gama Aviation, he is committed to maintaining high safety standards while mentoring upcoming pilots and delivering effective results in challenging operational scenarios.
- Terry Knights moved from his birthplace of New Zealand back in 1988 and after a successful career in the Royal Marines spanning 23 years Terry finally had the opportunity to follow his childhood dream of becoming a pilot. Early in his pilot training he identified that he would like to be an Air Ambulance pilot flying the King Air. After he finished flight training he flew as a jump pilot dropping parachutists off from 10000' down in Cornwall for the Cornish Parachute Club along with another position flying low level with a photographer taking photographs of houses, he also trained as a flying instructor, instructing for the Cornwall flying club, all to gain the required flying hours to move on with his flying career. He also flew as a pilots assistant for an air ambulance company flying out of Exeter, on missions throughout Europe. After two years he had gained the required amount of flying hours to take on the roll as a Captain flying a light twin engined aircraft with the same air ambulance company flying that he flew as a pilots assistant, transferring patients from the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man to the mainland. He now flies out of Bournemouth as a captain on the King Air servicing the same air ambulance contract covering the Channel Islands which he has enjoyed for the past 10 years.

Rachel Benbow, Chief Nursing Officer, International Medical Group (IMG)

Talk title: Roles and responsibilities of the flight nurse

Summary

This session will provide an insight into what the flight nurse can expect from their assistance partner and what the assistance partner should expect from the flight nurse. We will explore requirements and legal obligations of both parties

and some of the more nuanced expectations and challenges around our expectations.

Learning outcomes

- Understand all parties legal obligations of the flight nurse and the assigning organisation (assistance partner)
- Recognise the allocated mission in the context of the financial challenges imposed by the plan wording.
- Discuss the importance of the partnership between the flight nurse community and assistance partners

Rebecca Kinsey, Nursing Officer/Flight Nurse, Acute Clinical Services, International Medical Group / 4626 Squadron, Royal Air Force Reserves

Wendy Finbow-Wright, Flight Nurse, Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Tactical Medical Wing, Royal Air Force

Talk title: An introduction to aeromedical evacuation in the Royal Air Force

Summary

Aeromedical evacuation (AE) is a critical capability of the Royal Air Force (RAF), ensuring the safe and efficient transport of injured or ill patients by air. This presentation provides an overview of the AE process, including its history, purpose, and operational framework. Key aspects such as the role of RAF medical personnel, specialised equipment, and the challenges of delivering care in an airborne environment will be highlighted. The discussion will include insights into mission planning, patient triage, and the collaborative effort between flight crews and healthcare professionals to maintain high standards of care during transport. Real-world examples will illustrate how AE supports military operations, humanitarian missions, and disaster response, emphasizing its vital contribution to global healthcare delivery. Whether dealing with critical care cases or routine patient transfers, AE in the RAF represents a unique intersection of aviation and medicine. This introduction will provide attendees with a deeper understanding of the complexities and rewards of working in this highly specialised field.

Learning outcomes

1. Understand the Role of Aeromedical Evacuation By the end of the session, attendees will identify the key components of aeromedical evacuation and describe its importance in the RAF.
2. Identify Key Aspects of Aeromedical Evacuation By the end of the session, attendees will be able to identify the key roles, equipment, and processes involved in aeromedical evacuation within the Royal Air Force.
3. Explain the Importance of Aeromedical Evacuation in Operations By the end of the session, attendees will be able to explain the role of aeromedical evacuation in supporting military and humanitarian operations, emphasizing its impact on patient care and mission success.

Biographies

- Rebecca Kinsey, RN(A) MSc ACP, BN (Hons), RAF Flight Nurse Rebecca Kinsey is a nurse with 22 years experience of full-time military service in the Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service. She specialised in primary care, earning an MSc in Advanced Clinical Practice and non-medical prescribing in 2024. A trained flight nurse since 2008, Rebecca has served in aeromedical evacuation, operational deployments, and liaison roles. She currently works full-time as a nursing officer for International Medical Group, while also serving as a reserve Flight Nurse for RAF 4626 Aux Squadron and maintaining clinical competency in out-of-hours and emergency care as bank staff for Cardiff and Vale
- Flight Sergeant (FS) Finbow-Wright joined the Royal Air Force in Jun 2001 graduating with a diploma in adult nursing September 2004. A military career spanning 24 years she has worked within the fields of Defence Rehabilitation, Emergency Nursing and Aeromedical Evacuation Liaison Brunei. With operational experience she deployed to Iraq working in the field hospital wards and later in Afghanistan, Emergency Department this led to further deployments on the Medical Emergency Response Team (MERT) in both Afghanistan and Kenya. Currently FS Finbow-Wright works as a flight nurse on the Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron based at RAF Brize Norton undertaking repatriation of injured/sick personnel, dependants and the operational management and logistical co-ordination of other Aeromedical Missions

Sponsor and exhibitor listings

The RCN welcomes sponsorship from the health care industry to deliver educational initiatives and events for the nursing profession. Financial support is accepted where there is clear alignment in objectives and strong grounds that the collaboration will add value to the RCN's educational offer.

The RCN works to ensure that all commercial activity is ethical, mutually beneficial and complies with the Bribery Act and relevant codes of practice e.g. Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries and Association of British Healthcare Industries.

Sponsorship or exhibition led activity does not imply endorsement by the RCN of any products and services displayed by the sponsors or exhibitors at an RCN event.

The Royal College of Nursing would like to thank the following organisations for supporting this event.

Exhibitors



Future RCN Events

Date	Event	Location
31 March – 1 April	Education Forum Conference	Glasgow
20 June	Acute Care Symposium	RCN HQ, London
23 June	Children in Care Conference	Virtual
8 – 10 September	International Nursing Research Conference	Exeter
2 October	Fertility Nursing Conference	RCN HQ, London
14 November	Trauma and Orthopaedic Nursing Conference	RCN HQ, London
28 November	RCN SOM joint Occupational Health Nursing Conference	RCN HQ, London
9 December	Women's Health Forum Conference	RCN HQ, London