Cuddly ‘seal pup’ robot helps patients with dementia to relax

A ROBOTIC ‘seal pup’ is being used by nurses and therapists at Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to comfort patients who have dementia.

Research led by Penny Dodds, a nurse lecturer practitioner at the University of Brighton, has found Paro the harp seal helps relax patients when they become upset. The Japanese-designed robot costs £4,000 and has sensors to react to sound and touch.

The study was featured in a recent episode of the BBC Radio 4 programme You and Yours. Speaking on the programme, Dr Dodds said: ‘Clinically, if somebody’s experiencing despair and distress then we can use the robot as an alternative to medication.’

For more information on the research visit tinyurl.com/prw25s

Nursing students need general grounding before they specialise

MANY GRADUATES do not know how to perform ‘basic’ procedures such as taking blood, according to the chair of a major review of nurse education.

Lord Willis, who led the Shape of Caring Review, published last month, told RCNi that the current model of training in which students spend a year learning practical skills before specialising in one of the four professional branches would not be fit for the future. Instead, the Liberal Democrat peer said nursing students should spend the first two years of their degree developing a solid grounding before specialising in their third year. After graduation, employers should provide a year of preceptorship.

Describing situations his review had observed, Lord Willis said: ‘There is the issue of nurses leaving training with a degree, yet feeling inadequate to do what I’d call quite basic things. For instance, cannulation was left until they had finished their training and started working. Many felt insecure doing simple things like taking blood. When you drilled into that, it was because they were spending far too little time working with patients in terms of the whole person.

‘I want to raise the bar and inspire tomorrow’s nurses so they are confident, wherever they go. We must not have a situation where a mental health nurse goes into a home to treat a patient but does not have the skills to deal with their physical problems. I met mental health nurses who could not dress a wound because they did not feel competent.’

Guidance on covert filming in care homes issued by watchdog

THE CARE Quality Commission (CQC) has published guidance for families or friends who are considering installing hidden cameras in care homes to monitor their loved one’s treatment.

Before using recording equipment families are advised to raise concerns with those responsible for delivering care or, if urgent, with the CQC. Full consent should be gained from the person receiving care, and the dignity and privacy of other residents and staff must be taken into consideration.

The CQC acknowledges that opinion is divided on the use of hidden cameras, but has published guidance to help people make appropriate decisions, recognising that some people already use them.

The guidance also highlights the legal implications of using recording equipment, but stresses there have been no challenges by care homes to date.