**Hustled home' from hospital after suspected heart attack**

Three years ago I was admitted to Sheffield Royal Hallamshire Hospital with a suspected heart attack and I was wired up to a cardiac monitor to check my heart function for disease and possible complications. That evening I was told by one of the nurses that I no longer needed the specialised equipment and trained staff of the coronary care unit and ought to be moved to the medical ward, freeing the bed for another heart patient. But there was no empty bed on the medical ward nor on any other ward in the hospital. My conscience would not allow me to do other than offer to go home that morning instead of the next day as the cardiologist had suggested - my offer was accepted with alacrity. In the half hour or so that I took to have a bath, a new patient was being admitted to my room and wired up.

I was almost hustled home and felt that my departure was perhaps not so much a clinical judgement, but more unethical pressurising from the nurse, supported by junior medical staff. Since we have been hearing so much about the crisis of the lack of intensive care beds, I also wonder how much it is due to excessive cutbacks in lower-dependency ward beds, thus leaving insufficient reserves for recuperating intensive care patients.

*M Weller*
*Sheffield*

**Down to earth with the price of life**

I agree with the statement by the Bishop of Edinburgh that 'most of the important things in life cannot be quantified by the price index' (Perspectives January 24). Yet nurses still need to feed and clothe themselves and their families. Few people can afford to be motivated by the concept of choosing an occupation according to vocation. Nursing should be a self respecting, well paid and well trained profession, stocked with down to earth people who are able to relate to the down to earth patients they have to treat.

*Name and address withheld*

**Doctors and nurses are a breed apart**

So surgeon Peter Grime would further blur the differences between nurses and medical practitioners in order to make budgets go further, 'Common training way of the future' (News January 3).

Dream on. Nurses care for the individual, sick or well, doctors treat disease quite a difference.

*Ros Mason*
*Hove*
*West Sussex*

**Sadly, the NHS is guilty of murder**

When I started to think about a response to Paul Cornforth's article 'Guilty or not guilty' (Viewpoint January 10), I tried to find an argument against the charge made that the NHS is murdering the nursing profession, but I was at a loss to find one.

I was going to spout on about that warm glow I get when I feel I've actually helped someone. But when I look past the individual patient to the wider service, I have to confess that things do look bleak.

It has almost become a daily occurrence to see reports in the media about slipping standards and appalling patient care.

I have found that in my position as lead steward for the RCN student branch, nurses are happy to sit back and let things happen. Phrases like 'What can I do about it?' and 'It won’t do any good anyway', are common. I've even said the same things myself. Fighting the system as an individual is impossible, fighting as a group is more productive, safer and more effective. Unity and campaigning in numbers is the way in which we can highlight and even change the raw deal patients are getting.

As a profession we have battled and won before, it is time for us to take the initiative and no longer sit back and accept things.

*Andy Pierce*
*RCN student branch*
*Avon and Gloucestershire College of Health*

**Bed pan rule is unforgivable**

I rarely write letters to any newspaper or magazine, but I was appalled by a recent article, 'A time and a place' (Viewpoint January 17) about the experience of Judy Allen whilst visiting her elderly relative in a hospital ward. A nurse forgetting to fulfil a request for a bedpan because he or she is busy I can understand, but a refusal is simply unforgivable. Denying a patient the use of a bedpan because it is lunch time is an inhumane rule.

If one can't run a ward around these little inconveniences, one should not be there at all.

*Claire Rice*
*London*