Bullying causes half workplace absences

By Colin Wright

UP TO A half of all work absences are caused by bullying and harassment, RCN officer Anne Thomson told the RCN Scottish Board's annual conference in Dundee.

She said bullying caused increased staff absence, a higher turnover of employees, and a decrease in staff morale and performance, coupled with greater potential for industrial unrest.

Bullying and harassment are most commonly carried out by managers toward juniors in their departments, she said, but it is often difficult to recognise and, therefore, to act upon.

Ms Thomson said early recognition and action were crucial to prevention: 'Often the bullying takes the form of subjecting a person to ridicule and humiliation, monitoring everything they do very closely and being extremely critical of them. This is particularly true regarding administration issues.'

She gave an example of a nurse in A&E who was threatened with disciplinary action after three out of 35 forms were incorrectly completed.

RCN and trusts aim for flexible approach on absence policies

SICKNESS AND absence policies are being reviewed by trusts and the RCN in a bid to produce a more flexible approach which will serve both staff and management.

RCN officer Margaret Pullin told Nursing Standard: 'We are trying to get the trusts and our members to understand that a universal approach to dealing with absent staff, in whatever department, is not feasible.

'As this is a major cost to the trusts, they tend to look very unfavourably on any absenteeism, but we are trying to show them that it is only by adopting a flexible approach to managing the issue that it can successfully be resolved.

'Nurses tend not to abuse the system and indeed are far more likely to turn up for work when they feel ill rather than take extra time off when they feel fine.'

Rationing 'creeping in' without proper debate

INSIDIOUS RATIONING has been allowed to creep into the health service without a proper public debate taking place, RCN Scottish Board secretary June Andrews told the conference.

Ms Andrews said it was now accepted that most people in nursing homes have to pay for their care, a situation which had 'crept in' without adequate political discussion.

'There has always been rationing in the health service. But perhaps the nature of that rationing has now changed,' she said.

She pointed to the case of 'child B', which hit the headlines last year when a girl's local health authority refused to pay for her treatment as it was unsure of its effectiveness.

Ms Andrews said the issue had not been properly explained in clinical terms, but was simply passed off as a way of saving money.