Mituko Inaoka and Mariko Kusumoto of the Japanese Nursing Association visited the RCN’s London headquarters last week to discuss the demise of second level nurses in Japan.

**Stitching wounds by schoolboy was ‘isolated incident’**

*By Pat Husby*

A staff nurse and doctor who each supervised a 17 year old schoolboy who stitched a patient’s wounds face disciplinary action by Bradford Hospitals trust.

An investigation was launched last week after the two incidents became known. Malcolm Poad, group surgical manager, said that while suturing was a minor procedure, the matter was being taken seriously.

‘We have a very professional and dedicated staff in the A&E department who set themselves high standards,’ he said. ‘This is an isolated incident and we are sorry that on this occasion a rare error of judgement has been made.’

Formal disciplinary interviews with the two staff involved are being set up.

The hospital’s casualty ward hit the headlines in September when it was described as ‘like an army “MASH” unit’ by Lesley Sterling Baxter, of Bradford Community Health Council. The ward was said to have a shortage of nurses.

The schoolboy, who has applied to train as a doctor, had been on work experience at the hospital for two months when the first incident occurred. On October 20 he was being supervised by a senior house officer who showed him how to suture the patient. He put two stitches into the patient’s leg under the doctor’s supervision. He is said to be very upset to have caused such distress.

The same patient returned to the casualty department. The schoolboy was there, under the supervision of a staff nurse. The nurse thought he was a trainee and supervised him as he inserted three stitches.

The trust said the patient had been re-examined and was fine. But it accepted that a work experience student should not have been allowed to carry out the procedure. The patient and her GP have received an apology and work experience placements have been suspended pending a full review.

The RCN said it was concerned at the apparent lapse in supervision disclosed by the incidents. Nurses are not allowed to stitch patients until they have completed their training due to risks of infection and scarring.

‘Patients have the right to be treated by qualified nurses, doctors or therapists as appropriate and that seems not to have happened in this case,’ a spokesperson said.

**Row over reinstatement of rapist to nursing register**

Ministers have refused to intervene in the row over the restoration of a convicted rapist to the nursing register.

Junior health minister Tom Sackville was questioned on the matter in the Commons last week, but insisted it was an issue entirely for the UK Central Council.

But his reply was condemned as ‘pathetic’ by Labour MP Tom Cox, who had asked Mr Sackville whether the health department had had any discussions about the case of Subashan Bunbuhan, who was imprisoned for rape. Mr Bunbuhan was removed from the register in July 1992 and restored in June this year.

Mr Cox, MP for Tooting, says nurses at St George’s Hospital in his constituency were upset at the man being allowed back on the register.

‘They feel that the professional standards and integrity of nursing are being eroded by this decision,’ he told Nursing Standards. ‘The minister’s response was pathetic.’

**Sacked nurse fails to overturn ban on lesbians and gay men in armed services**

Jeanette Smith, the nurse who was sacked from the RAF because she is a lesbian, has lost the latest round of her legal fight to end the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces.

Ms Smith and three men who were sacked from the services for being gay, have failed in an appeal court bid to overturn the Ministry of Defence’s policy. They were also refused leave to appeal further to the House of Lords. Master of the Rolls Sir Thomas Bingham said it should be up to the Lords whether to hear the appeal.

Counsel for the four, David Pannick QC, said if the Lords did not hear the appeal, the four would be ‘off to Strasbourg on the first available plane’, to take the case to the European Court of Justice.

**IN BRIEF**

- Mary Henry CBE, registrar of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales for 27 years, has died. Miss Henry joined the GNC, the predecessor to the UKCentral Council, as first assistant registrar in 1943 and became registrar in 1947. She retired in 1973. Reg Pyne, who worked as deputy registrar to Miss Henry immediately before she retired, said: ‘She was a lady of great wisdom and very high standards and I found her a pleasure to work with.’

- Rodney Bickerstaffe was expected to be confirmed as the next general secretary of Unison yesterday following a ballot of the union’s members. Mr Bickerstaffe was secretary of the National Union of Public Employees prior to its merger with COHSE and NALGO to form Unison. Current Unison general secretary, Alan Jinkinson, retires in February 1996.

- Nurse Ros Lowe has been appointed to the Audit Commission, which oversees local government and health expenditure. Ms Lowe is operations director of Hillingdon Hospital trust. She is a former deputy general secretary of the Health Visitors’ Association and regional nurse for North West Thames RHA.

- The RCN has called on chancellor Ken Clarke to fund nursing care provided in nursing homes in his budget on November 28. Separating nursing costs would start to address some of the anomalies in funding long-term care and make funding decisions clearer and fairer, the College claims in a briefing to MPs.