Abbott ignores European dimension

I am saddened that the MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington has used her local paper, the Hackney Gazette, for the promulgation of ill-founded, mischievous opinions about a nation which, in recently joining the European Union, holds great expectations of our ‘shared’ future.

In questioning whether ‘Finnish girls, who may never have met a black person before, let alone touched one, are best suited to nurse in multicultural Hackney’ Diane Abbott reveals her ignorance of the European dimension to the preparations of nursing students for practice.

Since 1991 I have, as a senior nurse tutor, taught in a number of Finnish nursing colleges. Under the Erasmus/Socrates arrangements in place between my institution and that of Espoo College of Nursing, students of Espoo’s International Nursing Education Programme have gained much valued experience of nursing at Trafford General Hospital, St Thomas’ Hospital and Stepping Hill Hospitals in Stockport and Tameside General Hospital in Ashton-under-Lyne.

This International Nurse Education Programme was set up some three and a half years ago to enable Finnish nursing students to nurse in a multicultural community, such as Hackney.

It may be of interest for Diane Abbott to learn that a third of students who are accepted for this nursing programme come from Africa, mainly Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda. All teaching on the course is in English.

When you consider that many Finns are multilingual, most in southern Finland speak Swedish and English, and a considerable number also speak Russian and German, there is, I believe, little more Finns can do to address other cultures.

Stan Duncan
School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, University of Manchester

See ‘Perspectives’ by Diane Abbott page 17

VSO nurse tutor couldn’t get a job

Further to the issue of supposed nurse shortages, I am a registered nurse with 12 years experience and ENB certificate in cardiology who has spent two years overseas with the VSO as a nurse tutor in Zambia. But I couldn’t get a job when I returned to the UK.

After more than 100 applications, I hadn’t even had an interview and never any explanation about why I wasn’t being successful. Was it that my experience with the VSO was seen as negative?

My work in Zambia has taught me many lessons which are very relevant to the NHS today, for instance how to budget and make the best of limited resources. Also much of the racism in the NHS today is due to lack of understanding of other cultures.

I now co-ordinate the VSO Health Network, promoting the work of health professionals abroad and encouraging health organisations in the UK to take a global perspective. The VSO also encourages trusts to recognise the value of working overseas and many now support staff who want to volunteer with VSO by keeping their jobs open for when they return.

All these initiatives go some way to valuing the contribution health professionals make when they return from working overseas. However, there is much more that can be done. If you would like to help make a difference, please get in touch with me at the address below.

Liz Smith
VSO, 317 Putney Bridge Road
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Correction: Getliffe K (1996) Care of urinary catheters. Nursing Standard 11, 11, 47-50. Table 3 of this CE article was omitted. The table listed the following key points for patient education: anatomy and physiology; what a catheter is and why it is needed; personal hygiene, especially hand washing; connecting and disconnecting bags; disposal of urine and cleaning of bags; dietary advice; avoiding constipation/fluid intake; dealing with catheter problems; and obtaining supplies. Please note, however, that the table was not required for completion of the assessment.

OBITUARY

Terry Wood

Terry spent all of his nursing career in the service of people with learning disabilities.

He was promoted to senior nurse at Leicester No 3 HMC in the early 1970s, which was a pilot scheme for the introduction of the Salmon Nursing structure. This gave him the opportunity to use his initiative with the support of two fine nurse leaders of the time, Tony Lloyd and Leslie Bagnall.

He left for Surrey in 1972 when he was appointed principal nursing officer at Botley’s Park Hospital, where he soon made an impact as a visionary and innovative nurse leader who cared passionately for this client group.

He was one of the first professionals to be called upon to advise the regional nursing officer on issues in mental handicap. Along with Professor Joan Bicknell he led the recovery of Normansfield Hospital following a damaging inquiry.

He suffered for many years with arthritis in both hips for which he had surgery. This led to his early retirement in 1983 and the start of a new life in his beloved Mojacar in Spain.

Terry was a lovely, sensitive, caring and fun-loving man. He will be sadly missed but fondly remembered by his many friends, family and professional colleagues. It was a privilege to have worked with him and enjoyed his company over the last 25 years.

David Rye
Alan Parrish