NARROW MAJORITY IN FAVOUR MEANS NURSES WILL SEE PAY INCREASE BEFORE END OF MAY

By Jack Shamash

NURSES CAN expect to see their pay increase in their pay packets before the end of May, after staff representatives voted by a narrow majority to accept the recommendations of the pay review body.

As predicted in Nursing Standard, the vote held by the staff side of the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council last Tuesday was won by 12 votes to 11.

The RCN, the Royal College of Midwives and the Association of Supervisors of Midwives voted for immediate acceptance of the pay deal. Unison, the GMB and the Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association were outvoted when they tried to delay a decision until after the election.

Nurses will get an immediate 2 per cent rise plus 1.5 per cent from December. The advance letter, giving instructions to trusts to pay the extra money, is being prepared this week.

By the end of the month it should be approved by the Department of Health, printed and mailed out. Staff side secretary Chris Cardwell said: 'Nurses should see the extra cash before the end of May.'

Unison's deputy head of health, Malcolm Wing, said: 'We were disappointed by the meeting.' Unison felt that a delay would help health workers who were not covered by a review body and for whom pay levels have not been set. 'Other health workers were dumped by the RCN and RCM,' he said. Phil Gray, RCN director of labour relations, said: 'There will be a sigh of relief from nurses that the pay award is settled. Nurses will be able to focus on nursing and not interminable and wasteful struggles to win a fair pay rise locally.'

See Comment p14

Six per cent rise for trust bosses

A SURVEY which shows that NHS trust chief executives' pay has been rising by more than double the percentage of nurses' pay has provoked anger in nursing organisations.

The survey, by Incomes Data Services, showed that basic salaries for NHS trust chief executives rose by an average of 6.2 per cent in the year to March 31 1996. Most nurses received a 3 per cent pay rise during that time. The bosses' rise in the previous year was an average of 5.8 per cent.

A spokesperson for the RCN said the College had no problem with managers being properly rewarded for what they did.

She added: 'However, it will not be lost on nurses that trust chief executives have had annual pay increases of more than 6 per cent for the last four years while nurses have been awarded 3 per cent or less.'

Unison's head of health Bob Abberley said the figures proved 'the unfairness at the heart of the government's approach to the health service.'

For copies of the report telephone Incomes Data Services 0171 250 3434

Mind your head: A 'Virtual Migraine Experience' was launched at the Edinburgh Science Festival last week to help people understand what happens when a migraine occurs. Using a headset, visitors to the festival will be able to experience a virtual migraine. Blood vessels within the outer vascular area of the brain (shown here) dilate and increase in permeability during an attack.