I hate Martin Platt

Mike Lehane says *Coronation Street*’s resident nurse is too perfect

FOR YEARS I believed that patients’ views on nursing issues were informed by documentaries such as *World in Action* or *Panorama*. But recently a relative shattered that illusion and told me that most people’s information on the NHS and, more importantly, what they expect from nursing staff, came from soap operas.

Since being enlightened, I have viewed soaps and medical dramas to see what I should be doing to improve my skills. The conclusion is that I do not want to be a nurse, or any other health care worker, having seen what the public expects of us.

It would appear that the soaps are unable to survive without a medical storyline. And it is *Coronation Street* which in my opinion is the major sinner when it comes to health issues. It is the only soap where one of the main characters is a nurse, yet Weatherfield General should be reported to the UKCC for its treatment of poor Martin Platt. The hospital just would not survive without him.

To the best of my knowledge Martin is a D grade staff nurse, but in every story with any medical involvement, there he is, making all the decisions. When Tracey Barlow took her overdose it was Martin who informed the relatives. When Steve MacDonald was admitted to Casualty, Martin was there to sort him out.

When ‘Psycho’ Don tried to kill Alma many characters ended up at Weatherfield, when Alma mentioned Martin he was phoned at home and he appeared soon after to sort out the immediate problems.

Martin appears to work in every department and never complains about his pay, never goes on any courses and does not appear to have ordered *Nursing Standard*. He is not worried about PREP or his future career prospects, given that Weatherfield is unable to cope without him – it is about time he was promoted.

It may be best if the soaps left health issues to others but then who would the public have to compare nurses with? Until that time I will just have to continue hating Martin Platt because I will never live up to his standards.

People not paper

The government’s response to a recent case of abuse in care homes is inadequate

Colleagues from the learning disability field will be glad that the residents of two private care homes in Buckinghamshire have seen their abusers punished.

Angela Rowe, a nursing home director who ill treated residents with learning disabilities at Stoke Place Mansion House and Stoke Green House over a ten year period, was sentenced to two half years’ imprisonment, and her colleague Lorraine Field was jailed for 15 months.

However, I’m not so sure that people with a learning disability will feel that justice has been done.

This case has provoked a predictable but hollow response from the government – it has promised to review the inspection procedures. Inspection units already face unrealistic expectations and more inspection and regulation will, I fear, simply result in staff responding to paper rather than people. In any case, we shouldn’t need a piece of paper to remind us not to abuse vulnerable people. Nor should we depend entirely upon approaches which encourage staff to scrutinise each other’s practice.

A striking aspect of this case is the size of homes. Many people believe that alternatives to hospital now consist of three-bed ‘ordinary’ accommodation.

However, the 30-plus beds in Buckinghamshire show that most people with learning disabilities still live in large, congregate settings. There are arguments in favour of small and large, but the most compelling one for small homes is that I have never met a person with a learning disability who wanted to live with 29 strangers. Neither have I met a commissioner who wants the same, yet money is handed over to providers and such practice is endorsed.

Having said this, we may all be missing the point. The attention given to size of accommodation is motivated by the need to solve financial, rather than lifestyle, issues. For instance, research has focused less on factors that minimise the risk of abuse than on structural issues such as size and location. The main point is surely that it is more important how people live than where people live.

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