UKCC to set national higher level standard

By Anna Minton

NURSES PRACTISING at higher levels will be expected to reach a generic UK-wide standard, according to long-awaited UKCC proposals. The standard will apply across all areas and in all environments.

The proposals were published last week as part of a consultation process in which nurses are expected to give their views on how the standard should be applied. But the document does not question three core principles of the UKCC proposals; the recognition of a higher level based on clinical competence, a UK-wide standard and regulation of a higher level of practice.

Nursing unions gave a cautious welcome to the publication. Christine Hancock, RCN general secretary, said: 'We are very pleased this document has come out and we look forward to making our response.'

Sarah Walker, UKCC director of standards promotion, expects the principles to mark an end to the confusion surrounding the issue. She said that, although nurses would not be consulted about the core principles, a series of workshops will take place throughout the consultation period, which runs until October 20.

Whether higher level practitioners should have the new standard marked on the register, and whether they should have the suffix (H) after their initial registrations, are among the areas open to question.

The UKCC plans to publish final proposals in December. Pilot projects to test the assessment process are planned for 1999/2000 with revised arrangements for recognising a higher level of practice beginning in 2001.

Calls for evidence on the use of CS spray

THE Home Office, which claims CS spray has no long-term effect on patients with mental illness, has been challenged to publish its evidence.

The call by Fraser Bell, the nurse at London's Maudsley Hospital whose report into CS use sparked questions in the House of Lords last week, has been backed by the mental health charity MIND.

The report found that a third of mental health trusts had treated people sprayed by the police and urged the Department of Health to act.

In a written answer, Home Office minister Lord Williams said the use of CS spray on people with mental illness 'may well represent the most benign option'.

Jenny Willmott, policy officer for MIND, said: 'MIND is concerned about the interaction of CS spray and psychotropic drugs, and Lord Williams has already confirmed that there has been no specific research done.'

Lack of proof stalls Saudi case

A LACK of evidence is hindering freed nurse Deborah Parry's plea for an open UKCC hearing so she can 'clear her name'.

Mandie Lavin, UKCC professional conduct director, said: 'Strenuous efforts' to obtain details of Ms Parry's murder conviction in Saudi Arabia had provided no proof.

Ms Parry, now employed by a British nursing agency, said: 'I'd be happy for a UKCC investigation because it may be the only opportunity I get to be cleared by an official body.'