District nursing suffers from lack of funding

The editorial concerning the Audit Commission's report on district nursing (Nursing Standard March 3) remarks that there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of qualified nurses choosing to undertake specialist district nurse training.

I have four and a half years' valuable experience as a community RGN however I was unable to secure sponsorship from the trust this year despite having worked diligently for them over a long period. Only two district nursing posts at degree level are sponsored on an annual basis.

I feel funding is the major reason why nurses are not specialising in district nursing.

Lynne Chambers
Cambridgeshire

Pension rights and the right to retire

I would like to offer my apologies to Jill Blunt (Letters March 3) and all those who misread and misunderstood what I meant (Letters February 17). I did not state that we should be encouraged to retire, only given the opportunity.

I accept I have a valuable part to play as mentor to staff with less experience and preceptor to students. I was merely trying to point out the actual service component of pensions.

It is surely not too much to expect all your years to be taken into account.

After years of staged pay awards, unsocial working hours and so on, you would feel that your efforts had been appreciated.

George Massan
Paisley

Setting the record straight about nurse education

My letter of January 27 about nurse education has provoked a plethora of apparently angry responses (Letters February 10).

They highlight what Christine Hancock believes about nurses 'eating their young' and give an insight into the paranoia of the nursing profession. The point that I was trying to make, which was so widely misinterpreted, was that nursing has fought long and hard to move into higher education and we should not be evicted without a fight.

Doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, social workers, teachers are all entitled to higher education but no one has satisfactorily explained why nursing does not have a right to be there.

I agree that Project 2000 will never be perfect but we would be fooling ourselves if we thought that every nurse should be fully competent with an extensive range of skills on day one following qualification – I am sure Tony Blair wasn't perfect representing his first client.

Mark Carroll
Newcastle

In defence of the role of auxiliary nurses

I am a nursing auxiliary and I found the article about washing a patient insulting (Readers Panel January 6).

Although I am untrained I feel I have been correctly taught by trained staff and have enough common sense to assess individual patients and their needs.

It is untrained staff who give out meals, drinks and water jugs. If patients do not eat or drink all that is given to them this is noted and the information passed on. While I am performing these tasks I have time to talk to the patients and this allows me to assess their psychological condition.

If all the tasks which are performed by untrained staff were done by trained staff, they would have no time to complete the jobs they should be doing.

EA Martin
Lancashire

Recruitment incentives will not aid retention

In her letter (March 3) about student grants, Valerie McGrath puts her finger on it precisely.

While wishing to increase NHS nurses, the government decided to focus recruitment by hiking up the starting wage – failing to consider the real targets. How many people will study on a pittance for three years to start at £14,400?

Craig Graham
Airdrie

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