Soho vigil helped to heal scars of senseless bomb

Like everyone who cares, we search for an answer to the reason why a fellow human could carry out such a senseless act as the Soho bombing. We are horrified because, as Paul Boateng, the home minister said, we have a right to be different in a pluralistic society.

As a gay couple and as nurses who were deeply concerned, we attended the vigil service in Soho Square within 48 hours of the bombing. It was expected to be a low-key affair but 2,000 people turned up.

The determination that we would overcome supremacist ideologies with their characteristic racism and homophobia, was palpable.

There were calls for more work to ensure equality in law for gays and lesbians, calls for action on the part of the government, and an explicit acknowledgement by a senior police officer of the ‘strength and dignity’ of the gay and lesbian community.

A&E staff from St Thomas’ sent their condolences. The multi-ethnicity of the gay and lesbian community was also recognised.

We have such a composition in the nursing profession too.

Perhaps nurses can now explore more extensively into equality issues. Perhaps the urgency of such an examination is made more obvious by recent events. Perhaps some good will come out of this, after all.

Andrew Koh, Mark Newlove
Stoke Newington

Meningitis vaccine

In last week’s issue we reported that a new meningitis vaccine (News May 12) was likely to be given at two, three and four months old when babies receive immunisation against measles, mumps, rubella and polo. This is wrong. Babies receive diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough (combined) vaccination at two, three and four months. Polio and Hib are also given at the same time. MMR is given to babies at 12-15 months.

Pregnant or otherwise, lifting should be out of the question

I am a pregnant staff nurse working on a medical ward, and patients find it hard to understand that nurses no longer lift patients. They believe it is part of our role.

Patients may not ask me to lift them as they wouldn’t want to harm my unborn child, but they would ask another nurse even though there is a risk to their backs.

Most patients do not hesitate to say: ‘Can you lift me up the bed nurse?’ When we suggest using a hoist, the patient seems surprised and most do not want to be moved this way. My colleagues help me out by wheeling cardiac patients to the toilet and lifting heavy monitors.

There are many clinical procedures that demand correct lifting techniques. Other procedures we can’t avoid.

We need more patient education to inform the public that lifting is dangerous for anyone, whether or not they are a nurse. Often nurses will lift for quickness and to prevent patient embarrassment, leading to needless injury.

J Bromley
London

Channel 4’s Psychos is sensational and negative

The media’s portrayal of mental illness to date has understandably been poorly received by those in the know. Psychos surely has the potential of exacerbating and sensationalising this negative and inaccurate profile of people who experience mental health problems, and quite possibly creating the same view of the staff.

I’m keen to know what process programmes such as this go through in order to be allowed on air and what input of expert opinion and guidance they receive. Stories of patients’ hospital stays and symptomatology could bring back painful experiences for those who have been through psychiatric care. Further, the cases we see are probably based on true experiences to a degree.

Has confidentiality been adequately protected or could someone watch this series only to see an actor portraying identical clinical features as his or her own, however unintentional this may be? I will watch more episodes and may well find my opinion changing, but I would be interested to hear others’ views on the programme.

Karen Lascelles
Aylesbury

OBITUARIES

Mary Blakeley
Occupational health nursing leader and life vice-president of the RCN, Mary Blakeley, OBE, has died aged 89.

A leading figure in occupational health, she was a member of the RCN’s Occupational Health Central Sectional Committee from 1957 to 1964, being its vice-chair for four years and its chair in the final year.

In 1962 she became the first occupational health nurse to be elected to the RCN council, and from 1964 to 1966 was its chair.

The college made her its president in 1968, the first occupational health nurse to occupy the post. She became also the first president to serve for four years.

Appointed a member of the Permanant Commission and International Association of Occupational Health, she persuaded the association to set up a nursing committee in 1966, which produced a series of reports under the title: ‘The Nurse’s Contribution to the Health of the Worker.’

Laurence Dopson

Yvonne Lester

Yvonne Lester, nurse activist and former senior occupational health nurse, had died. Ms Lester was an active member of the RCN’s Plymouth branch and the RCN’s Work Injured Nurses Group. She was a member of the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health and advised the DSS on disability issues.

Ms Lester worked at the Devonport Naval Base in Plymouth for 22 years until her retirement in 1995, when she continued to work for the MoD as an occupational health adviser.

She was a warm, caring, considerate person who made an important contribution to nursing.

Christine Watson, RCN President