Quality varies in hip surgery

THERE IS wide variation between NHS trusts in the cost of hip replacements, supervision of surgery, length of patient stay in hospital and follow up after operations, according to a National Audit Office report.

It says the NHS Executive and the Medical Devices Agency should require all hip prostheses to be subject to appropriate trials before they are generally used in the NHS, and restrict use to prostheses with long-term evidence of effectiveness, in line with the recommendations of the National Institute of Clinical Excellence.

But it said there were many examples of good practice and dedicated consultants, nurses and other NHS staff caring for patients with hip pain.

Shaping health issues in Europe

RCN REPRESENTATIVES have attended their first meeting of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU).

Speaking at the three-day conference in Lisbon, EPSU general secretary Carola Fischbach-Pyttel said: 'Health and social policies are high on the European Union's agenda. That's why we're particularly pleased to have the college in EPSU.'

An estimated 500 delegates at the conference last week discussed working time, gender equality, public services and the growth of the European Union.

RCN policy adviser Howard Catton said: 'Increasingly, nurses' working environment and health issues are influenced by Europe. EPSU is one of the important ways in which the RCN can shape the European health agenda.'

A third of heart patients don't understand nurses

By Christian Duffin

ALMOST ONE in three heart patients have difficulty understanding nurses' answers to their questions, research shows.

But 79 per cent of patients questioned in the second National Survey on NHS Patients in England said they trusted all their hospital's nurses. More than three quarters felt they were treated with respect and dignity and 85 per cent said all or most of their hospital's nurses knew enough about their condition.

This year's survey focused exclusively on coronary heart disease (CHD) patients. Only 69 per cent said they easily understood their CHD patients. Only 69 per cent said they trusted all their hospital's nurses knew enough about their condition.

RCN primary care policy adviser Mark Jones said the government's modernisation action team on patient empowerment, of which he is a member, would be addressing the issues raised by the survey.

He said there were good and bad messages for all health professionals in the findings, adding: 'It's time nurses and doctors set aside their differences to enable patients to make their own choices.'

Unison head of professional conduct Peter Marshall said: 'The results are very disappointing. Obviously nurses' communication skills need to be improved. These skills are supposed to be taught.'

Seven in ten patients surveyed said a nurse had gone out of his or her way to help them on at least one occasion during their hospital stay or visit, and 82 per cent said staff did everything they could to help with their pain at all times.

A third of patients said they were bothered by noise on the wards some of the time, while 5 per cent said excessive noise was a problem all the time.

More detailed information on the CHD survey will be published in the summer and available online. Results will be divided by age, sex, social class and hospital trust.

National survey shows most patients trust staff, but don't always get clear answers

Life savers go public

THE BRITISH Heart Foundation has welcomed a government initiative to provide defibrillators in public places.

Health minister Yvette Cooper and the National Director of Heart Disease Roger Boyle launched the initiative last week at the MetroCentre in Gateshead, home to the first of 700 defibrillators.

Others will be provided in railway stations, shopping centres, airports and bus stations across England over the next year.

The Heart Foundation estimates that of the 780 people who have a heart attack every day in the UK, up to 250 will die before reaching hospital, and many could be saved by the use of a defibrillator.

'Defibrillators and fully trained operators in public venues could make all the difference between life and death,' said BHF nurse adviser Belinda Linden.

This year's survey focused exclusively on coronary heart disease (CHD) patients. About a third of these said they easily understood their condition.

Only 69 per cent said all or most of their hospital's nurses knew enough about their condition.

RCN policy adviser Howard Catton said: 'Increasingly, nurses' working environment and health issues are influenced by Europe. EPSU is one of the important ways in which the RCN can shape the European health agenda.'