We welcome all readers' letters but reserve the right to edit them, and withhold names and addresses or both. Please keep to a maximum of 200 words. Write to The Editor (Letters), Nursing Standard, Nursing Standard House, 17-19 Peterborough Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2AX. Please include your address and a daytime telephone number. You can also email us at: nursing.standard@rcn.org.uk

Government is ignoring the value of experience

I feel fortunate to work for a community trust that values its staff and actively promotes their development. However, I feel very undervalued by the present government for the 20 years' hard work, dedication and experience I have put into my career.

I am one of only two E grade senior staff nurses on my unit. We often run the unit in the sister’s absence. We have a busy caseload and work within the multidisciplinary team to facilitate safe discharge.

We are employed by the local community trust, but the hospital was funded partly by the local GPs. We have GP medical cover for one hour a day and consultant cover each evening for half an hour. We are the only ENB 998 holders on the ward and, as we approach 40, we are aware that we face a time when the majority of experienced older nurses are set to retire, leaving staff like myself to continue to develop, motivate, teach and encourage junior nurses, some of whom are now earning only £500 less than me.

Why is it the government feels it can turn a blind eye to E grades who, if we all left, would leave the NHS lacking in experienced, dedicated nurses.

The time has come to reward the staff who have shown their dedication and belief in the NHS by staying for years. I consider myself a professional who actively speaks for nursing. It is about time the government opened its ears and listened.

Lesley Twigger
By e-mail

Fears that Harry will raise false hopes on stroke care

The Everyman programme, The Trouble With Harry (BBC1 October 10) was billed as 'an uplifting, inspirational film'. I hoped it would be helpful in drawing attention to the plight of stroke victims and, perhaps, highlight the need for improved management. Not so.

Sir Harry Secombe received an extraordinary amount of loving care and intensive therapy. Indeed, he even had music therapists involved in his rehabilitation.

There was an abundance of staff, no sign of an indwelling catheter and, although he also has prostate cancer, continence management was not an issue. We saw a smooth transition from acute care to rehabilitation.

The BBC has a duty to tell us how his care was provided so that unrealistic expectations are not raised by this film. Every other stroke victim in the country deserves the same level of care and support.

Intensive care and therapy hold the key to recovery and rehabilitation, and Sir Harry's enduring popularity has given us the opportunity to examine the quality and quantity of care offered to stroke victims by the NHS.

Mary White
Matlock

Sue Thomas, RCN adviser in chronic disease and disability, wrote to the BBC to express concerns she had received from nurses about this programme. The BBC responded as follows:

Your comments have been drawn to the attention of the programme's producer who points out that the programme did state in commentary that intensive therapy is the core of stroke treatments in NHS and private hospitals.

While Sir Harry is a well-off man whose celebrity status means he can afford to be treated in a private hospital, it remains true that physiotherapy is the main course of treatment for any stroke patient regardless of income – and the production team did check this was the case in NHS hospitals too. They were very aware of your concerns and worked closely with BBC Education to ensure they were not representing stroke treatment from an unbalanced perspective.

This whole issue was extensively discussed from the beginning of production, and the producer feels that although no one can pretend that a private hospital is not more luxurious than others, the treatment itself was the same as in an NHS hospital.

Sue Thomas welcomes comments from nurses on stroke units. You can contact her on 0171 409 3333.

Old is more than useful if not necessarily beautiful

I keep reading the NHS is short of nurses. If this is so, why is it that once nurses in senior management positions reach around 50, so many are dispensed with?

It would seem knowledge and a wealth of experience gained over many years are worth little or nothing in this era of 'young is beautiful'. Fortunately, many nurses who were discarded before their sell-by date, have managed to not only survive but prosper outside the NHS.

Many of us soon realise our experience and training have equipped us to start our own businesses, or become involved in the private or voluntary sector, often earning much more than we did before.

The majority of senior nurses have many years of productive work ahead of them that should not be wasted.

Peter Wilkinson
Lancashire