**TB tests for school children**

SCHOOL NURSES will today begin screening older school children in Leicester for tuberculosis after the number of confirmed cases rose above 30, including four teachers.

The older age group was originally due to be screened after the Easter holidays because the outbreak at Crown Hills Community College had previously affected only students aged between 11 and 14.

Leicestershire Health Authority's consultant in communicable diseases Philip Monk said bringing forward the screening programme was right, 'given this evolving situation'.

As Nursing Standard went to press, local and national clinicians and experts were meeting to decide whether further screening is necessary, on top of the older students.

A screening programme was launched to cover close contacts of the three initial cases.

Professional officer for school and public health at the Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association Pat Jackson said that the outbreak showed the need to continue routine immunisation for school-aged children against TB.

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**New pension options for nurses**

NURSES ARE being targeted to sign up to the new stakeholder pensions, introduced on April 6 at the start of the financial year.

Insurance brokers claim many nurses could benefit by switching from their current arrangements to the new pension scheme.

But RCN senior employment relations adviser Jose Irwin warned any nurse considering a change to seek independent financial advice first.

'This may not represent the best deal,' she said.

Broker Hargreaves Lansdown stresses in its promotional material that the scheme is not intended to replace the NHS occupational or additional voluntary contribution (AVC) 'added years' schemes.

But it added: 'The majority of nurses may be better off paying their extra pension contributions into a stakeholder pension, rather than continuing to pay into their existing AVC arrangement.'

The Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association is advising its members to get 'truly independent financial advice'.

But a spokesperson for the Association of British Insurers, which represents 440 insurance companies, said: 'These days companies have to go through so many hoops to make sure their literature is acceptable that the last thing any company would want to do is to be seen to be encouraging mis-selling.'

Both the NHS Pensions Agency and the RCN are drawing up their own stakeholder pensions schemes. The RCN scheme will target nurses working in the independent sector who do not have access to occupational pensions.

See analysis page 14

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**GPs to prescribe yoga sessions**

PRACTICE NURSES and GPs can now refer NHS patients to yoga sessions at their local gym or leisure centres, health secretary Alan Milburn has said.

Supervised schemes in aerobics can also be provided for patients with conditions including heart disease, obesity, diabetes, back problems or depression.

The initiative is part of Exercise Referral Systems: A National Quality Assurance Framework, drawn up the health department and experts in the science of sport.

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**News managers urge enhanced role in disease management for specialist nurses**

The NHS CONFEDERATION has called for a radical rethink of how primary care and hospitals work together to provide outpatient services.

The way outpatients services are currently delivered is destined to fail, with between 30 and 70 per cent of work adding no value to the patient, says its report, Modernising Outpatients, published last week.

The document calls for an end to traditional outpatient services and demands new roles for nurses and doctors, with specialist nurses undertaking a wide range of chronic disease management, sigmoidoscopy and other endoscopy.

Traditional distinctions between primary and secondary care should be removed, with specialists available everywhere and new pathways of care developed. These should be based on clinical governance, as well as shared training, working and approach.

The report's authors warn that the emphasis in the NHS Plan on solving long outpatient waiting times by expanding capacity could, on its own, make matters worse.

This, however, has not stopped health secretary Alan Milburn praising the report. He said it endorsed the NHS Plan's thrust for improving patient-centred care: 'The NHS must continually ask whether it can do better. This is a demonstration that it can.'

But RCN community care adviser Lynn Young said the confederation's ideas were not new.

'What's been recognised is that nursing is the linchpin in the management of chronic disease and minor illness. Most of health care is chronic disease and minor illness. If we can use nursing better, we would crack that, then the rest of the NHS would be a doddle.'

But Unison head of nursing Karen Jennings believes the proposals could increase efficiency: 'It will cut down on the time someone has to wait before they go to a consultant.'

The report came as 124 new primary care trusts (PCTs) went live in England.

Ms Young criticised the pace of change. She said: 'I love PCTs. The structure and the independence of the organisations are good. But ministers want it done yesterday, and that is a problem. I have spoken to nurses who will be employed by the new PCTs and all the knew about them was the name and not much more.'

For a copy of Modernising Outpatients call NHS publication sales on 0870 444 5841. Cost: £8.50