Sort out the sexism or lose nurses

I have seen many articles and letters which have concentrated on the difficulties men have had in being accepted in the nursing profession. But I beg to differ. I am a nursing student and have just finished a placement with a male colleague where we had very different experiences.

On day one, I was left to orientate myself with the patients while my colleague was given paperwork and referrals to do. Of course, I appreciated the opportunity to meet and work with the patients, but my colleague was somewhat perturbed that by the third week he only knew a handful of the patients and only because I had introduced him to them.

This continued throughout the placement. He was invited into doctors’ meetings while I had to ask, and he got to go on outreach and was even named key worker for a patient.

Our last day summed up the whole experience. My colleague was sitting in the office with nothing to do while I was doing a urine test. The qualified staff needed some help to dish out the dinners, but instead of asking my colleague to help they asked him where I was so I could help!

It appeared to us that because he was male he wasn’t expected to do the ‘women’s’ jobs of bathing, feeding or laundry. Instead he was left to do ‘medical’ and management tasks. As we try to encourage more people to join nursing, maybe we should try to iron out the inequalities. Just because someone is male doesn’t necessarily mean they want to be a manager, and just because someone is female doesn’t mean they are not career minded.

Name and address withheld

Heavy-handed regulation putting off new recruits

People ask why nursing doesn’t attract as many recruits as it used to. The answer may lie in the way it’s run. Until recently, nurses registered for life. Then the UKCC ruled that we must re-register every three years – and pay for the privilege.

Next it ruled that nurses must study for at least 35 hours every three years – ostensibly to maintain our standards. But isn’t this a bit paternalistic? Can’t we do it ourselves? Other professions are self-motivating in this respect, so why treat nurses so differently?

Having set up this requirement, the UKCC now audits it. Those randomly targeted have to state how their study has benefited their practice. Surely this is demeaning? What other profession imposes such conditions on its members?

Ironically, the UKCC fails to perceive that such heavy-handedness compromises nursing’s status as a profession. Nothing is more likely to harm it than being over-regulated and dominated by the very agency set up to protect it.

Iain Colquhoun
Swansea

Male nurses: Discriminated against or singled out for management?

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Name and address withheld

Help is there for Filipino and other foreign nurses

I was interested in Linda Thomas’s column about the plight of some overseas nurses (perspectives June 6), as I am the person who accommodates these nurses in ‘safe houses’ until I can relocate them.

I liaise with the UK Filipino community and put these nurses in contact with a Filipina priest, who tries to help them. I am aware that there are lots of nurses in isolated areas in the UK who might be in need of help or advice, so if any nurses from overseas would like to contact me, please email kuyahelpme@aol.com or call me on 07801 829144.

The assistance is not just for Filipino nurses – I realise that other overseas’ nationals are also in need of help. So if you have concerns, please contact me and together we can try to resolve your predicament.

Please do not be afraid to come forward. We can help you if you make contact.

Allen Reilly
Secretary, Filipino Community Association