Why criticise my choice to nurse older people?

I am a third-year student on my last placement and due to qualify in four weeks. When I tell colleagues that I am going to work on a ward for older people their reactions have varied from disbelief to horror. Why? What is wrong with wanting to nurse older people? Ok, it is not high-tech, glamorous or ‘sexy’, but it is challenging and rewarding. Nursing older people encompasses all the skills we have been taught at university: communication, decision-making and teamwork, as well as clinical skills such as wound dressings. Some of the comments I have received are insulting. I have been told I will be bored, I will get a bad back or that I will become deskilled very quickly. I think not. As for a bad back, these wards have a marvellous modern invention called a hoist. It saddens me that people are so ready to judge my career choice — I would not dream of criticising theirs just because I do not want to do it. The next time anyone asks me why on earth I would want to nurse older people, I am afraid I shall forget my manners and tell them to mind their own business.

Angela Bidgood
Warminster

Saying thank you properly is the least we can do

With reference to Carolyn Benson’s letter (February 26), I have recently finished my DipHE in learning disabilities nursing. I had the great privilege of working with many overworked and underpaid staff. I did flag up and find research while on placement and I was able to discuss it with people far more experienced than me, therefore gaining knowledge and helping them. I have never felt obliged to give a gift to any of these people but always have at least written a card to them and where appropriate their patients. On several occasions I have been treated to lunch or given gifts to say thank you.

It is hard work for all of us, students and mentors. I think respecting each other and saying thank you properly is the least we can do.

I am sorry that Ms Benson has had such a hard time, but maybe she can learn a lesson in good communication skills for when she is overworked, underpaid and a mentor to students.

Sally Meethan
Plymouth

Nothing has changed for these experienced nurses

Does Agenda for Change value and reward experienced and well motivated staff nurses? Have any lessons been learned since the grading fiasco?

Within the NHS there is a large workforce of immensely experienced and skilled staff nurses. They have not moved up the career ladder because of lack of opportunity or unwillingness to move location.

In reality, there is no career pathway for them. These nurses take responsibility for patient care, ward management and student training and perform tasks previously undertaken by junior doctors. Often they work unsocial hours, with little or no support from senior managers or the ever growing band of specialist nurses. Frequently they work extra unpaid hours to cover poorly staffed wards and departments. Does Agenda for Change alter anything for them? I fear the answer appears to be a resounding NO.

Susan W Ackroyd
Newark

Consultant nurses will earn less on new scale

Pay bands eleven and twelve of the current consultant nurse pay scales are more than those proposed in Agenda for Change. Pay band top eight B with six increments gives the top consultant nurse £45,000, which is less than bands eleven and twelve on the present scale. Also, the consultant nurse’s working day is to be...