which is quite a big area. Being forced to leave your family for such a long time is not in line with the the family-friendly policy I was led to believe was in place for student training.

The government is constantly stating that we have a nursing shortage and this is surely going to grow over time.

So instead of aiming all of the assistance at qualified staff, why not those who are trying to achieve their goal of becoming a nurse? Surely this would relieve some of the pressure on the health service.

If I did not have children, covering this wide area would I’m sure present no obstacles. But I do have commitments and I am not willing to penalise my family to get my diploma.

Karen Sandeever
By email

Infection control is an integral part of practice

I was disappointed to read about RCN primary care adviser Lynn Young’s comment that infection control is ‘another burden’ for primary care workers (news July 2).

Infection control is integral to all healthcare in all settings. The precautions recommended in the National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidelines have been advocated for many years by infection control teams.

If we are to keep ahead of current and emerging infections it is vital that a culture viewing infection control as an added burden is rapidly replaced with one in which it is seen as vital for safe and competent practice.

Lindsay Cameron
Glasgow

Pay is important to public’s perception of nursing

The article on nursing rebranding in the United States (news July 9) does not seem to be relevant to the nursing profession in the UK.

The US can recruit more staff and change attitudes because it already offers better pay and better conditions and therefore an attractive career choice. Changing public perceptions of the work of nurses in the UK, however, will only make a minimal difference to recruitment.

Our main problem is that we do a hard job for comparatively low pay. This fact we know is already a part of the public’s perception of nurses and it is the first hurdle we have to get over to improve recruitment.

How can we expect young people to become nurses if we tell them they would have more responsibilities as nurses but would earn more as managers in McDonald’s?

Money is a basic part of this equation, not only in itself but because it represents the respect our profession commands. And at this point it doesn’t seem to command much.

Lindsay Cameron
Glasgow

I allow me to recommend The Grocer. I’m not talking about the man who runs the shop at the end of my road, although he seems nice enough. I mean the magazine.

Every week since 1862 The Grocer has been keeping retailers up to date with news and views from the trade. There are articles about packaging, stories about takeovers, and any number of interviews with the movers and shakers of the high street. Plus, there are big, glossy adverts.

These puff the usual products: yogurt, vodka, cereals and sweets. But because they are aimed at shopkeepers rather than customers, their tone is different to anything we shoppers are used to.

Take this ad from Wall’s, whose curious logo reminds me of a heart shrouded in several layers of white fat. ‘Watch out for innovation planned for 2003 to excite and invigorate the category,’ it says. ‘Over £20.5 million total brand spend. Stock up on these six products NOW to maximise profits.’

In other words, Wall’s is splashing out more than £20 million to persuade us to buy its ice creams, so traders would be barking mad not to fill their shops with the stuff.

When Wall’s talks about ‘the wrapped impulse market’ and describes one ice lolly as ‘the BIGGEST volume driver in kids’, I feel like a small boy standing at the door of the staff common room and hearing the teachers laughing about us pupils. ‘Ahem!’ I feel like saying. ‘I’m not deaf, you know.’

Although to be honest, I would rather they carried on for a bit. That way, I can find out what else they have in store for us.

Take the magazine’s special report on ‘bagged snacks’, as they say in the trade. Apparently, there’s a real problem in Britain concerning crisps, nuts and other nibbles. It’s nothing to do with excess fat and salt in the nation’s diet and everything to do with a potential slow-down in this £1.8 Billion sector.

It seems so many of us are snacking – 95 per cent, according to research – that it’s difficult to ‘bring new consumers into the market’. Fortunately the industry has come up with a solution, as one marketing director explained to The Grocer. ‘It’s about getting new usage occasions,’ he said. ‘We can’t get many more people to buy snacks, but we can get them to buy more often.’

Apparently, the key to this is ‘sharing’ and quite soon we will think nothing of meeting up with friends in the evening for the sheer pleasure of passing round bagged snacks. This will be jolly good fun, of course, although it might raise your blood pressure and leave a nasty taste in your mouth.

But then so does reading this marketing drivel.

David Newnham is a freelance journalist

Outside in

A glimpse into the world of snack food marketing has made David Newnham feel all queasy