Surely I should be able to retire earlier not later

I read with incredulity the government’s wish to increase the retirement age from 60 to 65 in the NHS.

In these days of rapid change, increasing workload and the demanding physical and emotional nature of nursing, I think that ministers should be looking at lowering the age of retirement to 55.

Do these people have any idea about what a nurse on the wards actually does? Or is it that they simply do not care.

I am a committed and highly motivated nurse, but surely after working in this stressful environment for 34 years I should be entitled to retire – if I wish to – at an age that is similar to that of other public sector workers, such as the police.

Beverley Cann
Leicester

Correction

In the news story ‘Staff confiscate weapons in Iraq’ (news July 16), we wrongly suggested that Lt Col Armstrong was officer commanding 202 Field Hospital. The officer commanding 202 Field Hospital was in fact Lt Col Whittaker. Lt Col Armstrong, while officer commanding 306 Field Hospital, had been seconded to 202 Field Hospital as OC COLPRO (and continuing education).

Hand hygiene: getting to grips with all the issues

As a senior nurse in infection control I welcome any initiative that increases hand hygiene (news July 16). However there are some issues in the article that I feel should have been addressed as wrong messages may be given.

The article implies that only nurses will be involved in this pilot study, but what about other clinical staff? The article also implies that it is acceptable to use alcohol as an alternative to handwashing. Are staff being given clear guidelines about when it is acceptable to use alcohol hand rubs?

David Casey
Denbighshire

As you read this, on a bus or in some clattering canteen, I shall be sitting on a beach in Greece. The sun will be shining and waves will be breaking on sand too hot for the human foot.

But don’t be envying me for a single second. For I can tell you now, with some degree of certainty, that I shall be having a horrible time.

It’s the whole sun screen thing that’s the problem – how much to put on, which factor and with what frequency. Last year was a gooey nightmare with a bucketful of sand stuck to it, and I have reason to believe that this year will be worse.

Not that I worry for myself. These days, I go for the sensible T-shirt alternative. And when my head shows signs of burning beneath its thinning cover of hair, I shield it with a knotted hanky.

So what if my family refuses to enter the taverna with me looking like something out of Hi-De-Hi? My family can get knotted too.

Because it’s my family that’s the problem. Janet may be a past master at self-basting, but when it comes to the kids… well, you can’t be too careful, can you?

Except that she can and most probably will, on account of having read some ancient magazine article in a doctor’s waiting room about ‘the proper application of sunscreen’.

Apparently, sun protection factors are based on the assumption that we daub on 2mg per square metre of skin. Yet, recklessly foolish that we are, most of us leave our weights and measures at home, with the result that we grossly underestimate the correct amount.

That’s why this bunch of scientists came up with a ‘simple’ routine. All we have to do, apparently, is divide the body into 11 areas and apply to each of these two ‘finger-tip units’ of cream or lotion.

Of course, had they attempted this operation with young boys, the scientists might not have used the word ‘simple’. Have you ever tried dividing a six-year-old into 11 areas while he dances a jig? Just getting him to stand on a towel will be bad enough.

Then there is that finger-tip unit – a strip of lotion squeezed on to the end of the finger, ‘beginning at the distal crease’. I predict trouble on that one.

So don’t be tempted to envy me my place in the sun. Instead, picture me, knotted hanky on head, trying to work out which of my many creases are distal ones, while Janet, flip-flops flapping, pursues a small boy across burning sand as his younger brother squeezes Factor 50 into my camera.

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