patients. It is unacceptable that nurses should be expected to sign an assessment when, due to the amount of documentation involved, they might not actually get near the patient. This is further exacerbated by the ever shortening stay of patients. Surely, this is not nursing.

Heather Tritton, Aylesbury

GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF PITUITARY DISEASE NEEDED
Thank you for publishing the article on pituitary disease (art & science May 24). I was diagnosed with a prolactinoma in August 2005 and knew nothing about the condition.

At the time it was scary. I was not sure what was happening to my body and was told I would have to be on medication for life to keep the tumour small. When I was carrying out my training there was little education on endocrine conditions, apart from diabetes mellitus. Pituitary disease needs greater emphasis in nurse training to make healthcare professionals more aware of it.

Claire Mount, London

TRAVEL BURSARIES AVAILABLE FOR FORENSIC NURSING
The RCN forensic nursing forum has secured £4,000 to support travel bursaries. The bursaries are available to members of the forensic nursing forum, and need to be for relevant current forensic nursing clinical practice, for example mental health legislation, physical health, risk, violence in mental health care and improving practice.

The closing date for applications is July 31. For further details email me at: david.langton@tsh.scot.nhs.uk

David Langton, by email

UNIONS SHOULD MAKE A STAND ABOUT NURSE REDUNDANCIES
I feel so frustrated after reading Sally James’s article about being made redundant (reflections May 31). If the number of redundancies that are taking place in the UK were happening in France, there would be protesting nurses on the streets and industrial action across the country.

I am sick of our unions backing off from facing up to employers. Nurses are the ones who are best placed to guide and inform on how health care can be delivered cost-effectively, not managers.

The problem that most trusts have is that, unless they have foundation status, they are budgeting year to year and making short-term financial decisions to meet government targets. They are aiming to keep the government happy rather than patients. So come on RCN and Unison, start putting pressure on the trusts. Get involved in understanding why these financial decisions are being made. Engage with the employers and show them that nurses are not going to be passive any more.

John Thomson, Wotton-Under-Edge, Gloucestershire

DON’T FORGET YOUR PASSPORT – AND MALARIA AWARENESS WEEK
During Malaria Awareness Week, I visited the It Only Takes One Bite interactive learning experience at London’s Science Museum. This gave me a greater insight into the nature of the transmission of the disease, and inspired me, both as a travel clinic nurse and practice nurse, to ensure that those visiting malarial areas are made more aware of the risks.

People are only too happy to take out travel insurance without fully being aware of what measures they can take to protect their health.

Hilary Glew, Windsor

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT WELCOMES NEW VOLUNTEERS
With National Volunteers’ Week nearly upon us, I would like to thank all the Macmillan Cancer Support volunteers.

Macmillan’s recent report, Worried Sick – The Emotional Impact of Cancer, puts the spotlight on the emotional, practical and relationship fallout that can follow a diagnosis. New volunteers are always welcome and we have a wide range of opportunities available to suit different people.

Peter Cardy, Macmillan Cancer Support, London www.macmillan.org.uk

Obituary

John Pauls
RCN activist
Died May 2006

It is with great sadness and a huge sense of personal loss that the Liverpool branch and the north west board of the RCN announces the death of John Pauls while on holiday in Egypt.

John started his RCN career as a steward at Walton Neuro Centre. Together with his fellow stewards, Margaret Prior and Eileen Doherty, he was the driving force behind the South Sefton branch. He remained as chair of the branch until its merger with the Liverpool group in 2004.

John always played a key role in the development of the RCN in the north west, and was a founder member of the north west board.

In addition to all the work that John did on behalf of RCN members, he will always be remembered for being a special person who touched the lives of many people within his community and in his work with his patients.

John possessed a beautiful scouse wit that was a mark of his warm, engaging and entertaining personality.

He was renowned for his sense of humour as many of us would testify. He will be sorely missed at congress where he was the hub of the north west congress ‘huddle’. He was our van driver, supporter and adviser, offering comment with a political acumen rarely matched in the NHS.

John was married to Lyne, a staff nurse at Walton Neuro. At this sad time, our thoughts and prayers are with her.

Mike Travis is a RCN council member for the north west