**COLOUR HELPS EASE BREAST EXAM ANXIETY**

A lighting system to help women undergoing mammograms feel relaxed has been introduced at a hospital in London.

King’s College Hospital has installed a system that emits colours into the examination room to reduce anxiety in patients. The examination, which includes taking an X-ray of each breast, is carried out the same as usual.

King’s head of breast radiography Patsy Whelehan said some women found the procedure uncomfortable while others experienced pain. ‘The new system may help to improve the experience for many of our patients and we are pleased to be one of the first hospitals to use it,’ she said.

However, good communication was one of the most effective ways of relaxing a patient and staff received specialist communication training, she added.

**CHIEF NURSE ISSUES 30-SECOND GUIDE TO HELPING PATIENTS QUIT SMOKING**

Nurses can help save the life of a smoker in 30 seconds, according to new advice from England’s chief nursing officer (CNO).

Dame Chris Beasley is promoting new Department of Health guidance that encourages nurses to help patients stop smoking.

The resource, called the 3As, says nurses should ask, advise and act in a bid to ‘hard to reach’ smokers.

It tells nurses to record their patients’ smoking status, advise them of the health benefits of quitting, and refer them to the NHS stop smoking service.

Recent statistics from the NHS Information Centre showed that the number of smokers who quit in 2008/09 was 32 per cent less than in 2007 – despite an increase in spending on the stop smoking service.

The 3As guide states smokers are up to four times more likely to quit smoking with support from their local NHS stop smoking service.

RCN tobacco policy adviser Jennifer Percival said: ‘Some nurses may be concerned about raising the topic in case they are seen as judgemental. But nurses need to know that by saying nothing they can be seen as endorsing smoking.

This advice will allow nurses to flag up the options to help people stop.’

Respiratory specialist nurse Christine Hood said: ‘The most important thing is to be non-confrontational.’

The guidance is available by calling 0800 731 6418.

**RCN updates standards for tackling infection**

New standards to help nurses in the fight against healthcare-associated infections (HCAIs) are due to be published by the RCN next week.

The ten standards will be based on four areas – hygiene, environment, education and decontamination – and will replace the previous ten outlined in the college’s 2005 Wipe It Out campaign.

RCN infection control adviser Rose Gallagher said the standards will support nurses to provide high-quality care and help them continue to drive down infection rates.

Health Protection Agency figures released last year revealed MRSA rates had dropped, exceeding targets set by the government, while the latest *Clostridium difficile* figures published this month showed rates had fallen.

Individual standards will include a focus on hand hygiene, while another will look at the introduction of a learning record or ‘passport of training’ to support personal development for staff or agency nurses moving between wards.

Addressing the RCN HCAI conference in Harrogate this month, Ms Gallagher claimed that most of the RCN’s original ten *Wipe It Out* standards had been achieved.

The standards included introducing a housekeeper role in wards across the UK, and ensuring matrons and senior nurses have the power, authority and protected time to ensure the environment is clean in line with UK standards.

The new standards, to be released ahead of a relaunch of the *Wipe It Out* campaign in October, will applicable to nurses across the UK. Ms Gallagher said she also expected a European-wide code of practice for infection control to be launched within a year.

**Community rates**

Meanwhile, the Department of Health inspector of microbiology and infection control Brian Duerden revealed officials were in talks to boost GPs’ role in reducing HCAIs in the community.

The conference also heard from the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) infection control adviser Jean-Paul Nolan. He told delegates that a new infection control guidance toolkit and website will be launched shortly to complement its *Clean Your Hands* campaign. Workshops will be held in each strategic health authority area to ‘train key infection control professionals to be experts in the new guidance’.