Nurses can help the fight against modern slavery

By Stephanie Jones-Berry  @NurseNewsSteph

Nurses are being urged to help join in the fight against so-called ‘modern slavery’, in an NHS awareness raising campaign.

Compulsory labour, sexual exploitation and forced criminality are all considered examples of modern slavery.

In a new video, NHS England director of nursing Hilary Garratt tells staff they play a vital role in identifying and supporting victims of these crimes.

‘Having such far-reaching contact with the public puts the NHS in a unique position to make a real difference,’ says Ms Garratt, who is also deputy chief nursing officer for England.

Ms Garratt says it is estimated that 13,000 men, women and children are trafficked for exploitation in the UK.

Up to 1 in 5 of those victims reported contact with healthcare services during the time they were trafficked. ‘Modern slavery is everybody’s business and we can all start making a difference today,’ Ms Garratt added.

The video goes on to explain that, through being aware of the signs and symptoms of modern slavery, healthcare professionals can help identify victims.

Potential signs include:

- Unusual presentation, including fear and anxiety
- Looking malnourished
- Evidence of sex trade involvement
- Showing signs of psychological distress and trauma

Watch the video at tinyurl.com/slavery-aware

More must be done to improve the life expectancy of people with severe mental illness, a new report urges. Nearly half of people in the UK with severe mental illness (SMI) have a 10-20 year shorter life expectancy than the general population, according to the report by the RCN and other health bodies. Recommendations in the report include reviewing staff training to ensure healthcare professionals are equipped to fulfil the physical health needs of people with SMI. Go to tinyurl.com/SMI-improvements

A pay rise of 1% promised to nurses in Northern Ireland 7 months ago will finally appear in their November wage packets, health minister Michelle O’Neill has confirmed. The RCN recently wrote to Ms O’Neill to highlight members’ concerns over the time being taken to process the award. The 1% pay rise is for the 2016/17 pay claim, and nurses will see the amount backdated to 1 April this year.

Leading nurse Pauline Watts had a date with royalty last week when she collected her OBE from the Queen at Buckingham Palace. The Public Health England lead nurse in quality, mental health, learning disability and dementia was made an OBE for services to nursing and health visiting. Ms Watts supported the delivery of the national health visiting programme a Call to Action, and the nursing framework Modernising Nursing Careers.

In brief

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Survey of 1,500 UK NHS workers by the Guardian on workplace bullying

4 in 5 survey respondents said they have been subjected to bullying

1 in 3 of those who said they had been bullied had been forced out of their jobs

55% said raising a concern prompted the abuse

1 in 10 of those who were bullied said they were subjected to violent behaviour and aggression

Read more: rcni.com/bullying-survey