Degree applications drop highlights ‘bleak outlook’

By Stephanie Jones-Berry @NurseNewsSteph

The number of nursing degree applicants in England has fallen by 23% in the past year, according to official figures.

Applicants from England making at least one choice for a nursing course fell from 43,800 in January 2016 to 33,810 in January 2017, data released by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) reveals.

Applications from European Union (EU) students are down by 25%.

The figures come ahead of changes to funding for nursing students in England in August this year, when the bursary will be scrapped and replaced with tuition fees and loans.

‘With 24,000 nursing vacancies in the UK, the government needs to take immediate action to encourage more applicants by reinstating student funding and investing in student education. The future of nursing, and the NHS, is in jeopardy.’

A number of universities spoke to Nursing Standard ahead of the UCAS announcement, confirming that applications were down.

‘If fewer nurses graduate in 2020, it will exacerbate what is already an unsustainable situation’

Janet Davies

The UCAS figures show the overall number of people from England applying to enter higher education is down by 6%.

A Department of Health spokesperson said: ‘Student contributions to university costs have changed on three previous occasions, and every time there has been an immediate dip in application rates followed by a steady rise. We are confident nursing courses will follow a similar trend and are certain we will have all the student nurses the NHS needs by September.’

255,000

older people are admitted to hospitals in England each year because of falls

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Emergency pressures in NI ‘intolerable’

A&E nurses in Northern Ireland are working in ‘intolerable' conditions' according to the RCN’s director for the country.

Responding to the latest waiting time figures for the country, which revealed nearly a third of patients attending emergency departments were not treated and discharged or admitted within four hours, Janice Smyth said: ‘Nurses are short-staffed, they are under extreme stress and feel like they are not able to provide a proper and safe service to patients.’

The waiting time target is 95%, but the figure for December last year was 69.9%. This was down 5.1% on December 2015.

A Department of Health spokesperson said the latest figures were disappointing, but added that £13 million had been allocated to support winter planning.

IN BRIEF

Academics at Middlesex

University and the University of Bedfordshire are to explore whether ‘culturally aware’ robots could help care for older people in future.

rcni.com/robot-study

WAITING TIMES

Fast fact

‘The most valuable asset the NHS has – so why are we having this debate about nursing staff pay? #scrapthecap'

Bernell Bussue
@BernellRCN

See page 12 for more on the MPs’ debate on nurse pay, or go to rcni.com/pay-debate

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