LETTERS

Action on Ralph not strong enough

Your editorial on the troubles at the UKCC was most welcome (September 14). As someone who relies on Nursing Standard for news and information on current affairs in nursing it is my opinion that your coverage of events has been most restrained.

As far as I can recall there has been little comment on developments until now when the verdict on the grievances against Mr Ralph has been made public. Not only are nurses entitled to know what is happening but so also are members of the general public. Everyone needs to have confidence in the statutory body which regulates nursing and safeguards the public interest. The degree of disharmony which exists among the senior staff of the UKCC must have a disruptive effect on the functioning of the whole organisation which is a matter for concern.

Urgent action to rectify the situation must be taken without delay. The measures which are reportedly being suggested would appear to be totally inadequate to cope with a situation in which a group of highly respected senior staff have lost confidence in a boss whose management style would seem to be totally inappropriate and unacceptable. The time has come for Mr Ralph either to take the honourable way out or for imposition of decisive action to end this saga.

This is not an internal personnel matter even though the nursing press and nurses themselves have been reluctant to comment. The President and Council of the UKCC should not be surprised if they too attract criticism for their indecisiveness.

Derek Dean
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UKCC right in Cooksley case

I write to applaud the UKCC’s decision regarding Sister Pat Cooksley. It was not only a victory for professional judgement, as the RCN and Unison suggested, but an example of a compassionate ruling not always typical of ‘procedure’ in the past.

I would also suggest that the onus of misconduct in this case should rest on the doctor concerned in not signing the prescription. Too often we see this lax attitude in medical staff, to the detriment of a nurse’s professional standing.

I am, however, saddened by that group of nurses who so vehemently and publicly criticised their colleague (The trust conducts itself well..., Letters, September 7). I really do wonder at their motives. Professional indignation, maybe, but I hope in times to come, when they see posts given by their trust to NVQ-holders and support staff, instead of junior grade registered staff, that this present zeal in support of their trust will be tested.

Further, I doubt if all of that group, or indeed any other, can look back and find no undetected ‘crimes’.

In these days, when the profession is assailed by government and ravaged by the trust system, we all need the support and friendship of our colleagues. I hope that these shining, self-righteous angels do not find themselves wanting in that department, if and when the time comes.

Jim Glen
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Cooksley victim of market ethics

The story of Sister Cooksley’s battle with Plymouth NHS Trust is a microcosm of what is happening in health authorities throughout the country. I am a nursing sister with more than 30 years in practice. I now work in the community and I can well understand the feelings of Sister Cooksley when we, who are dedicated to patient care, have to wrestle with our consciences because of the regime now in place. The introduction of nursing grades has not produced recognition of expertise and specialties. Nor has the recruitment of staff in less popular areas of nursing been encouraged.

Trusts are abusing the grading system, using it to replace higher graded nurses with those on lower grades. The fact that Sister Cooksley’s post has been advertised at a lower grade position is proof of this and it is not an isolated incident.

Nurses, particularly of Sister Cooksley’s generation, were trained with a strong emphasis on hands-on bedside patient care. It is a principle that has never been expressly challenged. Although administrative changes in the NHS were necessary, to have these extended to the nursing function is disastrous. Nurses are now in the ludicrous position of having well-tried practices challenged by managers who have no background of nursing care and who are attempting to bring to this caring profession, the