Developing leadership skills in clinical practice and management

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Throughout the UK, increasing responsibility is being placed on clinical nurses to play a leadership role within healthcare settings. Recognising the challenges, Nursing Standard is once again collaborating with the Royal College of Nursing and its corporate partner, Smith and Nephew, in launching the fifth Clinical Practice and Management Awards. Editor in Chief Linda Thomas explains the awards and the benefits nurses can gain from taking part.

The government is explicit in its determination to arm nurses, midwives and health visitors with the leadership skills it sees as essential in taking forward its modernisation programme (DoH 1999). Realising the Potential (1999), the Welsh strategy framework for nursing, is intent on encouraging nurses to develop the appropriate skills to deal with advancing technology and an ever-changing profession. Through its ward leadership programme, the RCN has identified the pivotal role of clinical nurse managers in improving patient care.

These are principles that have guided the Clinical Practice and Management Awards from the outset: the need to provide clinical nurses with the skills they need to develop their leadership potential to the full. For those who have participated in previous years, whether as entrants or eventual winners, simply taking part and completing the continuing professional development article assessments has brought its own rewards. Those who have been fortunate enough to win places on the tailor-made management course which comprises the award have found it has changed their lives both personally and professionally.

The fifth Clinical Practice and Management Awards are launched formally next week with:
- BBC Learning Zone broadcast of RCN Nursing Update programme – Nursing for a new era (see page 46 for screening times).
- Detailed information on how to enter.
- First of a series of five continuing professional development articles related to different management skills.
- The content of the RCN Nursing Update programme is linked to each of the continuing professional development articles and is obviously important. If you forget to set your video recorder, details on how to obtain a copy of the programme will be included with the entry form.

The first continuing professional development article is entitled ‘Meetings: the challenge’, and the others are similarly grounded in developing skills that are absolutely related to the day-to-day work of clinicians, whether in hospital or community settings, the independent or public sector of health care. If you decide to enter the awards, you will be given the opportunity to gain 25 RCN continuing education points, free.

Few nurses in clinical practice are given the opportunity to take advantage of the type of management courses from which the Clinical Practice and Management Award winners will benefit. The 12 who are successful in the current awards will attend a tailor-made course at Henley Management College in Oxfordshire. A place on a similar course normally costs £2,500, so with 12 places on offer, this represents an investment in nursing skills of £30,000. Accepting the responsibility which this implies is an integral part of the award for the winning entrants.

Entering costs nothing except concentration and commitment and you can expect to benefit whether or not you are an award winner. The management skills you will gain will stand you in good stead, wherever your career may take you.

REFERENCES