Knowledge Swap

Frances Pickersgill talks to two Russian nurses who came to the UK to see how we care for older patients.

The long-standing relationship between Russian community nurses and their counterparts in the UK culminated this year in a pioneering exchange programme designed to improve patient care by sharing ideas and practices.

Two Russian nurses visited the UK to explore developments in older people’s nursing and, in a few weeks, two UK nurses will visit Moscow to find out more about community nursing developments there.

The programme is possible because of a bursary established by community nursing charity the Queen’s Nursing Institute (QNI) in memory of Vera Lebedeva, who was nursing director of the Moscow Red Cross until her death in 2006.

Ms Lebedeva and the QNI secured funding from the UK government to develop home nursing services for older people in Moscow and to train community nurses in home care.

During their visit, Elena Perfilieva, Ms Lebedeva’s successor as Moscow Red Cross nursing director, and Irina Ostrovskaya, a senior nursing academic at the Moscow Medical Academy, which runs the community nurse training programme, visited older people’s facilities where nurses have key roles. These included a dementia unit, a day centre, a specialist unit at a major London hospital, a nursing home and an older people’s information centre.

The two nurses believe they can take some valuable lessons back to Russia. ‘UK nurses are able to work more independently yet are an integral part of the national health system,’ says Ms Ostrovskaya.

‘In Russia, community services are generally not part of the state-funded health system,’ she explains. ‘Care for lonely and frail older people often falls to organisations such as the Red Cross. That means it is doubly important for nurses to argue the case for good care.

‘We were impressed by our visit to the old age care unit at London’s University College Hospital where we met nurse consultant Jonathan Webster. He is showing how good nursing leadership and management are the basis of good care for older people.’

Senior roles

Mr Webster is one of around 60 nurse consultants in the specialty and confirms his belief that such senior roles are essential in improving care for older people.

Ms Perfilieva was struck by several other initiatives here in the UK. ‘We saw nursing and...’

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Midwifery conference: The fifth annual Nursing and Midwifery Council midwifery conference will take place on November 30 in Manchester. The event will focus on the importance of midwives working in partnership and will include the Dame Mary Uprichard annual lecture. Scenarios relevant to the conference theme will be used to highlight aspects of midwifery practice. The conference is for anyone interested in midwifery and maternity care. www.nmc-uk.org

Risk management: The British Standards Institute (BSI) is holding a conference on risk management and the application of the BSI risk management code of practice on October 22 and 23 in London. The meeting will provide a briefing on the first BSI standard for risk management, examine other related standards, and provide good practice guidance. It will cover what the standards are, how they can be applied in organisations and how they can help tackle risk management issues. Workshops will provide opportunities to discuss experiences with experts and share problems and solutions. http://tinyurl.com/5Wfaq

Global health projects: The nursing and midwifery office at the World Health Organization (WHO) is offering opportunities for graduate students and outstanding nurse or midwife leaders to be involved in global health policy, research and practice. These include an eight-week internship at WHO, an eight-week practice collaboration assisted by an adviser at a WHO Collaborating Centre, and a three-month scholarship...
medical students at London South Bank University working as interns on their placements with older people. It made me realise how important it is to introduce students to older people early in their training.

Ms Perfilieva also liked the approach of several specialised centres and units, such as Age Concern’s information centre in Nottingham, where professionals and carers can access a vast array of resources, was praised. ‘I want one in Moscow,’ she says.

“We also went to a specialist day centre for people with dementia, heart disease and stroke, and that too reinforced my thinking about the benefits of specialist nursing expertise.’

At the time of their visit, the Russian nurses were intrigued to find that polyclinics were the topic of discussion in UK health circles. ‘Nurses here asked us about Russia’s model of polyclinics, which the UK is interested in adopting,’ says Ms Perfilieva. ‘Patients can choose to consult a general doctor or they can be seen in the polyclinic. In the polyclinic, all services are available in the same place.’

If people know they have heart or skin problems, for example, they can go straight to the polyclinic to see a specialist who can either treat them or refer them for an outpatient appointment or immediate admission.

Both nurses are looking forward to showing their service to their British exchange counterparts – district nurse Caroline McGraw, who works at Islington Primary Care Trust, London, and Janice Roberts, a community matron from Central Surrey Health. They will travel to Moscow later this month and will attend a major conference to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons on October 1.

programme designed for outstanding nurse or midwife leaders to participate in global health policy development. www.who.int/hrh/nursing_midwifery/internships/en/index.html

Adverse incidents The NHS Training Hub for Operative Technologies in Healthcare (THOTH) and Action Against Medical Accidents are hosting a series of free events for NHS staff and patients called Managing the Consequences of Adverse Incidents: Empowering Patients and Clinicians in Patient Safety Work. Six events will be held around the country between September 22 and October 16. Meetings are designed to identify areas of good practice as well as gaps in the management process following an adverse incident. The workshops are intended to enable the NHS, patient groups and other organisations to work together to share ideas and experiences and to create solutions to some of the difficulties they face when an adverse incident has occurred. www.thoth.uk.com/normal/index.php or www.avn.org.uk

Practice nursing The general practice nurse toolkit has been relaunched and is available on the RGN website. The toolkit was originally developed by the Working in Partnership Programme, and includes good practice information for employment, education and professional development, competence, career development and quality improvement. www.rcn.org.uk/gpnToolkit