NMC uncovers nurses who are practising without registration

Nearly 100 nurses have been practising without registration, with some senior nurses failing to renew their registration for up to ten years, the Nursing and Midwifery Council has discovered.

The nurses were identified in a project targeting nurses who have failed to re-register. Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) chief executive Dickon Weir-Hughes said that nurses who allow their registration to lapse and continue working are breaking the law.

Unregistered nurses working in universities could invalidate students’ education, while those working at board level could be in contravention of the NHS Act 2006.

Professor Weir-Hughes has written to all directors of nursing and deans of nursing schools warning them to check they and their colleagues are registered.

He wrote: ‘It has come to my attention that a number of senior colleagues, either currently in or about to take up leadership or academic roles, do not hold an effective NMC registration. You will appreciate my concern about this matter.’

Letters are now being sent to nurses before their registration is about to expire. Professor Weir-Hughes is also writing to employers who have employees working without registration and will be alerting the Care Quality Commission about them.

He told Nursing Standard that 92 nurses have been found working without registration since the project began in March. Lapses generally occur accidently, often because nurses have

‘Those who allow their registration to lapse and continue working are breaking the law’

moved house and failed to update their details with the NMC.

Professor Weir-Hughes said: ‘Nurses need to value their registration. We at the NMC value it as a key way to protect the public.’

RCN assistant head of nursing Tim Curry said: ‘Such lapses are worrying as it exposes nurses and the public. Registration is fundamental to practice.’

Professor Weir-Hughes said GPs are causing particular concern as employers who are less likely to check nurses’ registration. Two of the 92 nurses who had lapsed registrations were working at the same practice, he said.

Nurses will soon be able to pay their registration fees by direct debit through the NMC website.

FOUNDERS RECOGNISED IN QUEEN’S BIRTHDAY HONOURS LIST

OBE
Susan Mary Downe – professor of midwifery studies, University of Central Lancashire.
David James McArthur – colonel, formerly with the Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Corps.

MBE
Ena Bingham – epilepsy nurse specialist, Belfast.
Pauline Byers – nurse and director of The Practice Development Unit, Derby.
Princess Campbell – retired nurse, Bristol.
Mary Ruth Clarke – head of midwifery, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.
Christine Cole – epilepsy nurse specialist, Hertfordshire.
Colin Godfrey – activities development nurse, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.
Debra Marie Hounsome – lieutenant commander, Queen Alexandra’s Royal Naval Nursing Service.
Uriel Jamieson – formerly head of policy and business support, chief nursing officer directorate, Scottish Government.
Richard Jones – former associate director of employment relations, RCN Wales.
Helen MacKinnon – director of nursing, NHS Education for Scotland.
Kathleen Lovatt – health visitor, NHS Sheffield primary care trust.
Teresa Neate – practice educator, Lansdowne Hospital, Cardiff.
David Nunn – community psychiatric nurse, Derbyshire Mental Health Services NHS Trust.
Helen Jane Singh – lieutenant colonel, Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Corps.
Diana Emmerson Wharton – practice nurse, Ministry of Defence.

ASSOCIATE ROYAL RED CROSS
Lindsay Devompur – corporal (acting sergeant) Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Corps.
**IN BRIEF**

**Nurses can access information on childhood continence problems via a new website.** The Education and Resources for Improving Childhood Continence (ERIC) site includes campaign materials for its Dry and Mighty initiative to raise awareness of bedwetting. Results of ERIC’s survey revealed two thirds of parents believe children who wet the bed will be being bullied at school. Go to www.eric.org.uk

**RCN members interested in nursing history can apply for a bursary to fund activities such as undertaking projects or research.** The Monica Baly bursary, worth at least £300, is awarded annually by the RCN Foundation to promote awareness of nursing history. The successful applicant is required to submit a short piece when the activity has been completed. Applicants should set out how the bursary would help develop them as a nurse historian. Go to www.rcnfoundation.org.uk/bursary_scheme by August 1.

**Nurses and doctors in Bahrain who treated injured protesters have gone on trial for participating in efforts to overthrow the monarchy.** The 24 nurses and 23 doctors arrested in March following anti-government unrest in the country have appeared before a special military court. RCN general secretary Peter Carter said: ‘We are concerned that healthcare workers appear to have been targeted for doing nothing more than treating patients in need.’

**New dosing guidelines for children receiving medicines containing paracetamol have been set out by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.** The new guidelines state dosage should change between the age bands of six to eight years, eight to ten years, and 10-12 years. The current guide has one age band of 6-12 years. Existing advice should be followed until the packaging changes later this year.

**Nurses can improve their understanding of sexual health issues with an RCN education package.** Launched last week, the learning zone resource covers contraception, men’s health, sexually transmitted infections and sexual assault. RCN public health adviser Jan Maw said: ‘This will help nurses, midwives and health visitors give more appropriate information and signpost patients to appropriate services.’ Go to http://tinyurl.com/3tz78d4

**Nurses have praised a groundbreaking trial offering HIV tests to patients attending A&E departments in London.** More than 450 patients have been tested at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital’s emergency department since January. There are plans for the tests, which are offered to patients aged 16 to 65, to start at St Mary’s Hospital in Paddington later this month. A Chelsea and Westminster Hospital spokeswoman said at least one person had tested positive since January and four patients were diagnosed during an earlier trial in 2009.

**RCN Wales director Tina Donnelly is urging nurses to encourage patients to have their eyes tested after she was diagnosed with a stigmatisation.** She said nurses should use initiatives such as this week’s national eye health week to prompt patients to go for tests. Around 100 people a day start to lose their sight in the UK and there are almost two million people in the UK living with sight loss, according to the Royal National Institute of Blind People.

**Acupuncture could help patients with unexplained illnesses**

Nurses should recommend acupuncture as a treatment option for patients who frequently attend GP surgeries with medically unexplained symptoms, say nurse researchers.

A study conducted on 80 patients who visited their doctor regularly and suffered from symptoms including fatigue, depression and headaches.

Results of the trial, published in the British Journal of General Practice, indicated that up to 12 sessions of acupuncture improved patients’ wellbeing and health status.

The sessions lasted approximately 60 minutes and were provided over six months at weekly, then fortnightly and monthly intervals.

Nurse Peter Griffiths, University of Southampton professor of health research and co-author of the study, said patient interaction with the acupuncturist may also have helped with their sense of wellbeing.

**NEW WEBSITE HELPS BRIDGE SKILLS GAP**

An education initiative designed to boost the skills of nurses has been welcomed by RCN Scotland.

NHS Education Scotland’s effective practitioner website, launched last week, brings together a range of resources for nurses, midwives and allied healthcare professionals.

The project helps nurses to apply the latest evidence-based care, develop their role and maximise work-based learning.

RCN Scotland associate director Ellen Hudson said the move filled a gap in education for staff at bands 5 and 6.

‘It is important, especially in these times of funding constraints, that there is access to lifelong learning, continuing professional development and education,’ she added. Go to http://tinyurl.com/6ask52n
Reforms forum falls to insist on nurse role in commissioning

By Erin Dean

Employers need to pay greater attention to the ongoing training and development of nurses, according to a major review of the NHS reforms.

After two months of listening to concerns about the government’s Health and Social Care Bill, the NHS Future Forum criticised the ‘disgraceful’ variation in continuing professional development (CPD). Forum chair Steve Field said some staff had not received any CPD in 30 years.

The forum made 52 recommendations across four themes – choice and competition, clinical advice and leadership, education and training, and patient involvement and public accountability. Its education and training report was written by nurse Julie Moore, chief executive of University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust. She said: ‘CPD needs to be adequately resourced and prioritised – it should be linked to staff appraisals.’

Professor Field, a GP, said the forum had hosted more than 200 events, received 25,000 emails, met 6,500 people and heard ‘genuine and deep-seated’ concerns. But he found the government’s aim of improving the quality of healthcare was universally supported.

Professor Field claimed the NHS will become stronger if the forum’s proposed changes are accepted.

The forum heard calls for nurses and other health professionals to have ‘a key role’ in commissioning local services. The pace of the proposed changes should be varied so that the NHS implements them only where it is ready to do so.

RCN general secretary Peter Carter said it was disappointing that the forum did not call for nurses to have a protected seat on commissioning group boards.

Dr Carter said: ‘Nurses follow the patient throughout their care and have a unique range of skills and experience. The government should enshrine this requirement in legislation, as the reality on the ground is that new commissioning consortia are being established at pace without nursing representation.’

The government was preparing its response as Nursing Standard went to press. Last week, prime minister David Cameron pledged to give nurses a bigger role in commissioning services. To read the NHS Future Forum report go to http://tinyurl.com/6fgcjc

PM PROMISES TO PROMOTE INTEGRATION

The Department of Health will continue to measure waiting times in A&E, and patients awaiting surgery will still be treated within 18 weeks of referral, David Cameron said in his keynote speech on the NHS last week.

‘We are keeping the 18-week limit,’ he promised. ‘That is in the NHS constitution, and it is staying. We shall continue to measure how long people are kept waiting in A&E. Nurses and doctors said we should, and that is what we are doing.

‘The difference is that we are going to measure outcomes too, like re-attendance rates for the same problem.’

Mr Cameron pledged to champion integrated care as part of the NHS reforms to avoid a ‘fundamental break and juncture between primary and secondary care’.

Competition

Research showing that death rates are lower in areas where patients have a choice about where to go for treatment was cited by Mr Cameron to justify the need for more competition in the NHS.

The London School of Economics report, Does Hospital Competition Save Lives?, examined heart attack mortality figures over three years. Researchers estimated that a ‘one standard deviation increase in competition’ brought a 1 per cent reduction in deaths from heart attacks.

Go to http://tiny.cc/LSEheart