HCA TRAINING SHOULD MATCH THE RESPONSIBILITY THEY HAVE

It would seem that healthcare assistants (HCAs) are the backbone of the NHS.

I recently sat in a hospital day ward for ten hours waiting for a knee arthroscopy. No ward sister or staff nurse spoke to me in the course of my preparation for theatre.

The HCA tested my blood sugar, blood pressure, blood oxygen levels, clerked me for the nursing records, asked all the personal questions and was instructed to communicate with me on the pre-op procedures.

The unit matron eventually saw me to explain that my operation had been cancelled.

The HCA told me she had received no formal training – not even a week's induction course. Should HCAs be given so much responsibility without formal training?

It is the nursing profession’s responsibility to ensure HCAs only undertake duties for which they have received proper training.

Giles Wynne, by email

RCN TO MARK CENTENARY WITH HISTORY OF NURSING EXHIBIT

Christine Eberhar (letters July 6) is right to highlight the absence of a museum of nursing in the UK.

Although British nursing has influenced the profession around the world, nurses’ contribution to the development of health care is undervalued.

It is important that we secure sources to ensure future researchers can study the profession’s development during the 20th century.

The RCN library and archives have been collecting and maintaining books, journals and papers since the 19th century. These resources, along with badges, photographs and oral history, are available to researchers in London and Edinburgh.

As the college approaches its centenary in 2016, it is planning a home for the history of nursing at our headquarters in London – an exciting new addition to the refurbished library space that will include exhibitions, events and workshops, as well as providing access to all our historical collections.

Susan McGann, RCN archives manager

CUTS TO NHS DIRECT BUDGET ARE BOUND TO AFFECT SERVICES

NHS Direct is cutting another £4 million from the front line staffing budget (news July 6), but says there will be no nurse redundancies. Posts will be cut through ‘natural wastage’. In reality, this means that NHS Direct is reducing patient services.

However they reduce the number of staff, they will still be cutting the service. There will be fewer staff to answer the same number of calls. The remaining staff will face a yet higher workload. They will not have as much time to give to patients’ concerns and worries, and how long will it take them to call people back?

NHS Direct cannot keep slashing away at its staffing budget and not affect the service it provides. There are no ‘smart working’ options here.

I first worked for NHS Direct in 2001 and I was proud of the service we provided. I am worried that managers cannot provide that level of service with more front line cuts.

Drew Payne, by email

WORKING TO ENHANCE CARE OF PEOPLE WITH LYMPHOEDEMA

I am a community nurse undertaking a postgraduate diploma in district nursing. My aim is to enhance the care provided in the community to patients with primary and secondary lymphoedema.

I would be interested to talk to lymphoedema specialists and district nurses with experience in this field, and also to see any algorithms or care pathways that have been developed.

Any help Nursing Standard readers could give me in respect of this project would be gratefully appreciated. Please email me at cheryl@hammond-uk.fsnet.co.uk

Cheryl Hammond, by email

Obituary

Maureen Hammond 1943-2011
Nurse, midwife activist, author and counsellor

Maureen Hammond was a forthright character, an active shop steward for the Royal College of Midwives and a campaigner for breastfeeding facilities and mother-and-baby rooms to be made available in shops.

She wrote for Just Women, a Somerset magazine, and observed: ‘I have delivered babies in mansions and horseboxes.’ Maureen encouraged home births and wrote Tales of the Expected, a book of poems about midwifery. She also wrote critically about the medicalisation of childbirth.

Born Maureen McKay in Liverpool, she trained as a nurse at the RAF Hospital in Ely, Cambridgeshire, where she met her first husband Tony Beck, a chef. She then worked at Fazakerley Hospital in Liverpool.

The couple emigrated to Sydney, Australia, where Maureen developed an interest in midwifery, assisting obstetricians. When she returned to the UK in 1977 she trained as a midwife at Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton, Somerset, before practising as a community midwife for many years.

Taking early retirement, Maureen worked as a civilian midwife in British army hospitals in Germany.

As a counsellor with the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers, Maureen persuaded Boots to provide the first mother-and-baby facility in Taunton, and other shops were to follow.

She also worked as a counsellor for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association, and assisted with the charity Turning Point’s drugs and alcohol rehabilitation services.

Divorced from her first husband, Maureen married Frank Hammond in 2001, who survives her. She died of leukaemia.

Laurence Dopson is a freelance journalist

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