LETTERS

We welcome all readers’ letters, but reserve the right to edit them or withhold names and addresses. Please write to: The Editor, Nursing Standard, The Heights, 59-65 Lowlands Road, Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middlesex HA1 3AW. email: letters@rcnpublishing.co.uk

Please keep letters to a maximum of 150 words, and include your full name, address and a daytime telephone number

NHS staff should feel privileged to have such a generous pension plan

As a clinical nurse manager in the private sector, I would like to comment on the news story ‘NHS pay freeze contrasts with private sector increases’ (August 3). Many of the private sector nurses who received a pay rise this year would have had no increase in the previous two years.

NHS nurses usually get two pay rises – their Agenda for Change increment plus their pay rise. With unsocial hours and overtime payments, they probably earn far more than their private sector counterparts.

NHS nurses do not know how privileged they are. Despite having to pay more contributions, their pension scheme remains exceptionally generous. It is far better than anything available to private sector nurses.

The NHS is bloated with senior clinicians who are motivated to stay in post only to earn their full pension, rather than work to improve patient care. This has a knock-on effect of holding back innovative staff who wish to make a difference.

Aldo Picok, by email

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE BILL IS DESIGNED TO DISMANTLE THE NHS

Fifty-five nurses signed a letter published in The Times on August 3 expressing concern that the RCN is doing too little to oppose the Health and Social Care Bill. The bill is progressing through parliament despite protests that, if passed, it will spell the end of the NHS in England.

RCN general secretary Peter Carter has responded by insisting that the college led in securing amendments to the bill that ensured nurses’ involvement in commissioning, reduced the independent regulator Monitor’s promotion of competition and confirmed the continuing legal duty of the secretary of state for health to provide a comprehensive NHS (news August 10).

But there is nothing in the bill enshrining nurses’ representation on clinical commissioning groups. The bill’s wording is unclear, but suggests the health secretary’s accountability will be undermined. Moreover, Monitor will become responsible for ‘preventing anti-competitive behaviour’, which is little different from ‘promoting competition’.

This bill is designed to break up and then privatise the NHS. The RCN leadership is being naïve or complacent if it thinks amendments will stop this process. It needs to join the British Medical Association in rejecting the entire bill. Surely this year’s RCN congress vote of no confidence in health secretary Andrew Lansley gives the college a mandate for this.

Gay Lee and Jan Savage, by email

CARE HOME RESIDENTS NEED REGULAR MEDICINES REVIEWS

I agree with Matt Griffiths (reflections August 3) that there is a need for regular medicines reviews for patients in nursing homes.

I visit a friend’s mother in her nursing home when my friend is away. This particular nursing home has 22 older residents, many of whom are bedridden, and it takes two nurses to