Four people meet tough peer criteria in 18 months

The body responsible for recommending who should become a member of the House of Lords put forward only four new peers in 18 months.

The House of Lords Appointments Commission received 170 nominations between April 2010 and last September. The successful nominees were farmers’ leader Sir Donald Curry, historian Peter Hennessy, psychiatrist Sheila Hollins and religious leader Indarjit Singh.

The commission’s annual report, published last week, does not reveal the unsuccessful candidates’ names or professions.

Currently there are only four nurse members in the upper house, and only two attend the chamber. Nursing Standard is lobbying to boost that number through its Peer pressure campaign.

A nurse seeking to become a member of the Lords would have to be approved by the commission, which says it recommends individuals based on merit and ‘their ability to make a significant contribution’. It has been asked by the prime minister to consider nominees who would broaden the expertise and experience of the house and reflect the UK’s diverse population.

Big regional variations in take up of seasonal flu jab

Less than half the front line healthcare workers in England have received the seasonal flu vaccine so far this winter – but the figure is up dramatically on last year.

A total of 43 per cent have been vaccinated, compared with only 26 per cent 12 months ago.

Figures show regional variations in uptake, with 37.9 per cent of front line healthcare professionals in NHS South West having the jab, compared with 54.4 per cent in NHS North West. In trusts with the lowest uptake, around one in ten front line staff have been vaccinated.

Birmingham Children’s Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is among the top performers, with 98.8 per cent receiving the vaccine. The trust’s immunisation coordinator, nurse Dan Bowen, said: ‘We used the power of social media to share stories and pictures of our teams, including every member of our trust board, having their flu jabs.’

Caroline Watkins has been made a fellow of the European Stroke Organisation. Professor Watkins (pictured), director of research at the University of Central Lancashire’s school of health, is a specialist in stroke and older people’s care, leading one of the largest stroke care research teams in the country. During her 20 years researching the condition she helped develop the UK’s stroke education framework.

RCN adviser in acute and emergency care Alan Dobson will leave the college next month to take up a post at Hamad Hospital in Qatar. Mr Dobson, who has been at the college for three years, will join a team overseeing the expansion of the hospital’s emergency department, which treats more than half a million people a year. Interviews for his replacement are expected to take place next week.

Nurses are being asked to apply or nominate colleagues for the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year 2012 awards. Categories include mental health, learning disability, public health, team manager, healthcare support worker, student and research nurse. There will also be a patient’s choice category. The closing date for entries is February 29, with winners announced at a ceremony on June 14. Go to http://tiny.cc/NI_nurse_awards_2012

Community nurses’ attitudes, assumptions and professional concerns are the most likely reasons why they reject new technology, a report suggests. Smart New World, by community nursing charity the Queen’s Nursing Institute, found big variations in the use of technology among staff outside hospitals. Institute director Rosemary Cook said: ‘Good technology should not be seen as novel, but the norm.’ Go to www.qni.org.uk/for_nurses/telehealth

The number of patients suspected of dying from deliberate poisoning at Stepping Hill Hospital in Stockport has risen to six, Greater Manchester Police said last week. Nurse Victorino Chua was questioned by police earlier this month and released on bail. Another nurse, Rebecca Leighton, spent six weeks in custody before all charges against her were dropped in September because of a lack of evidence.

The Care Quality Commission has concerns about the quality of care at four institutions for people with learning disabilities. The commission is carrying out unannounced inspections of 150 hospitals and homes throughout England. They focus on whether people experience safe and appropriate care, treatment and support, and whether they are protected from abuse. The latest findings are based on 12 recent inspections. Go to www.cqc.org.uk/LDreports2 for more details.

Three babies have died from a bacteria infection that spread from water taps in a neonatal unit at Royal Jubilee Maternity Hospital in Belfast. Health minister Edwin Poots confirmed the source and told the Northern Ireland Assembly that the taps and related pipework were being replaced. The neonatal intensive care unit was closed but the rest of the unit stayed open. A hospital spokesperson said: ‘All precautions are being taken to prevent the spread of the infection.’