48 per cent increase in fitness to practise (FrP) referrals over the past two years.

One of the main reasons for the huge increase in FrP referrals is that the NMC FrP director was doing the rounds of conferences three years ago. I heard her speak and her key message was not to decide locally if someone should be referred to the NMC. Refer them all and let the NMC decide, she said.

The NMC appears surprised by the marked increase in referrals. But it should have expected this, as at least one of its senior managers was asking for this to happen.

David Taylor, by email

GOVERNMENT AUSTERITY MEASURES ARE NECESSARY IN THE LONG RUN

Following health secretary Andrew Lansley’s address to RCN congress last month, RCN general secretary Peter Carter made clear the deep-seated unhappiness of delegates with the way the coalition government is treating nurses (editorial and news May 16).

But would a Labour government be any better? I doubt it. The last Labour government left the UK economy in an awful state.

No money means no money, and it has therefore been necessary to introduce austerity measures.

We need honourable people to manage what money there is, refuse backhandlers, take care of the poor, be creative in their thinking and encourage us to take part in the process.

Caroline Harvey, Topsham, Devon

SOUTH WEST PAY CARTEL WILL MEET WITH ROBUST UNION OPPOSITION

As RCN lead steward and chair of the staff side at Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust, I would like to assure members that we will challenge robustly any attempts by the pay cartel being formed by trusts in the south west on England to change national pay and local terms and conditions (news May 30).

The staff side at the most recent joint consultative committee meeting expressed deep concern over the proposals to drive down nurses’ pay and conditions.

We must maintain the status quo of Agenda for Change to ensure continuing quality in care, excellence in service delivery and robust professional and public accountability.

My fear is that the south west region of England is to be a guinea pig for the rest of the UK.

Jane Bovey, by email

SUPERB CARE AT ADDENBROOKE’S MAKES ME PROUD TO BE A NURSE

I recently had an unexpected 14-hour stay in Addenbrooke’s Hospital in Cambridge, arriving in A&E in the early hours of the morning.

I would like to express my thanks to all the staff I came in contact with during my stay – receptionists, porters, cleaning staff, nursing staff and doctors.

The care I received was excellent.

As a Queen’s Nurse and member of the prime minister’s nursing and care quality forum, it makes me proud to be a nurse observing the care given to patients at Addenbrooke’s.

Candice Pellett, by email

WORKSHOP ON HOW TO PREVENT UNNECESSARY MALE CIRCUMCISION

I was interested to read the letter (May 30) from Jon Young stating that the circumcision of young males unable to give consent is abuse.

I am the chief officer of Genital Autonomy, a charity advocating the end of non-therapeutic genital surgery on male, female and intersex children.

The NHS spends about £6 million a year on unnecessarily excising boys’ foreskins and intersex children are still having their gender chosen for them without their consent.

On Thursday July 26 we are holding a one-day workshop and mini-conference at Keele University in Staffordshire on how to prevent unnecessary male circumcision.

Further details are available in the events section of our website at www.genitalautonomy.org

David Smith, by email

Obituary

Dorothy England
1906-2012

Nurse who helped people escape Nazi Germany

Before she died in her sleep on May 10, aged 105, Dorothy Mary Margaret England was the RCN’s oldest member.

Born in Liverpool, Ms England trained as a fever nurse at Fazakerley Hospital, now University Hospital Aintree. She then undertook state registered nurse training at Liverpool’s Royal Southern Hospital.

She lived for a time with a Jewish family in Germany before the war, teaching them English and helping them to escape to England from Nazi persecution. While in Germany she became a committed Quaker.

Ms England trained as a midwife at the Women’s Hospital and was a health visitor in Liverpool and sister at the Royal Liverpool Children’s Hospital during the war.

In 1946 she asked to be posted to Germany to work as a relief worker.

Ms England joined a Save the Children Fund team near Lübeck, transforming a former munitions factory into a children’s hospital for refugees.

She trained many young women from the Baltic states and Poland in basic nursing techniques and established a shelter for homeless children.

Returning to England, she worked as a sister tutor for 18 years at St Thomas’ Hospital in London. After retiring from nursing, she qualified as a podiatrist to help older people who could not afford private care. Ms England was also an accomplished painter.

Bernell Bussie, director of the RCN London region, says: ’I had the privilege of meeting Ms England around the time of her 100th birthday and again on her 104th birthday, and we also spoke on the phone.

‘I was impressed by her sharp wit and her memories of nursing. She was an inspiration.’

Laurence Dopsen is a freelance journalist.