LETTERS

Richard Rushforth, referred to in the story, obviously has these qualities in spades – his students and patients are very fortunate.

People who could be good mentors need to be encouraged and their confidence lifted if we are going to create a generation of inspiring nurses.

Elspeth Raisbeck, Hampshire

TRADE UNIONS HAVE LONG SINCE DROPPED DIVISIVE ATTITUDES

The letter by Brid Hehir from the Do Good Charity (September 26) will no doubt stir up a lot of reaction by her provocative views on trade union values. Well Ms Hehir, if you think there is too much ‘chaff’ in the NHS that needs chucking out then please bring your ‘do good’ skills to the table.

The trade unions may welcome your input on how we can all work more efficiently while enduring cuts and wage freezes. But ‘do good’ culture is not the sole preserve of the independent sector. I can assure you it is alive and kicking in the NHS, which indeed relies on the goodwill of its staff to hold it together.

Trade unions and professional organisations work in the spirit of partnership to problem solve. They have long since dropped the old ‘us and them’ attitude. Maybe it is time you did too.

Gordon Lees, part-time RCN rep

THE BENEFITS OF SMALLER CARE HOMES IS NOT A NEW DISCOVERY

It is dispiriting to note the finding that people with dementia thrive in smaller care homes (clinical digest September 26). This is a classic lost opportunity. In 1988, the Griffiths report recommended that care homes have no more than 21 residents.

The report led to social services taking responsibility for commissioning care homes in England and Wales. Since then the monopoly purchasing position of social services, which has artificially held down fees, has meant that homes of optimal size are simply not viable at council rates.

Economies of scale are the only way to provide the standards demanded by the regulator, the commissioning officers, and the client. The Griffiths boat has long since sailed, and 60-bed units are now the norm.

How much better it would have been, how many more people would have had better care at the end of their lives, if we had acted first, not ‘how much can we afford?’, but ‘what result do we want?’

Andrew Makin, nursing director,
Registered Nursing Home Association

CONNECTING WITH NATURE IS VITAL TO MANY OLDER PEOPLE’S WELLBEING

Your article on outdoor spaces for people with dementia (features September 26) struck a chord. From where I sit, I hear the birds calling and have a view down a valley to the village and the sea. It is about a 4km walk from here to the beach and I like to do that every day.

Yesterday I met a 90-year-old man who also walks to the beach every day. He walks with a crutch in one hand and a pike in the other. At the headland he used the pike to cut away a small patch of briars and ivy on the ground. He says it helps to keep the view and little by little, if he does it every day, it gets done.

He told me that not even wet weather will stop him from his walk. He likes to keep moving and take in the fresh air.

Getting outside matters. We must open doors for people with dementia.

Maria McManus, independent dementia care consultant, Belfast

SEEKING COUNSELLORS WHO HAVE UNDERGONE NURSE TRAINING

I am a palliative care nurse undertaking training as a counsellor and studying for a degree in integrative-relational counselling at Kingston College, Surrey. As part of my dissertation I am carrying out a small qualitative research study looking at the experience of counsellors who have also undergone nurse training.

If you think you can help please email helen.healy2@ntlworld.com

Helen Healy, Surrey

Obituary

Carolyn Carter 1932-2012
Nurse, educator and civil rights campaigner

Carolyn Carter has died in Newton, Massachusetts, after a long illness. She was 79.

Born in Monessen, Pennsylvania, her mother was a dressmaker and her father was a janitor. He headed the Mon Valley chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), giving her early exposure to civil rights work.

In 1953 she was awarded a degree in registered nursing from the St Francis General Hospital in Pittsburgh, and was among the first African Americans to serve as a head nurse at the hospital.

She married Alphonse Carter in 1955 and they had a daughter, Cynthia. Carolyn took her daughter as a young girl to the civil rights March on Washington in 1963.

Carolyn gained a master’s in psychiatric nursing and a doctorate in higher education administration from the University of Pittsburgh, teaching at the school of nursing at Pittsburgh and the University of Cincinnati’s college of nursing.

In 1981 she was appointed assistant dean for student affairs and special student projects at the University of Pittsburgh’s school of medicine.

Throughout her career, she dedicated herself to mentoring young African Americans, encouraging them to pursue careers in nursing and medicine, and recruiting candidates from across the United States.

She developed a mentoring programme in Pittsburgh for schoolchildren to shadow clinicians through their summer holidays. Funded through a federal career opportunities grant, it continues today as the Summer Premedical Academic Enrichment Program.

Roger Evans is assistant editor, Nursing Standard