'VERY HUMBLING' TRIBUTE

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Ms Wells, whose nursing expertise includes diabetes and palliative care, said: ‘It is important to remember not just those who have died in past wars, but those involved in ongoing conflicts. A large part of the nursing workforce is still in Afghanistan.’

She added that it was ‘very humbling’ to be at the event.

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Withholding NMC fees is not the way to oppose rate hike

The RCN has warned nurses against withholding their registration fees in protest at the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) plan to increase them from £76 to £100 a year.

Speaking at an RCN council meeting last week, general secretary Peter Carter said he was aware that some nurses were thinking about refusing to pay the fees, but he advised that ‘it would not be the right way’ to oppose the move.

The council last week voted unanimously in favour of formally condemning the increase, which is due to come into force from February despite protests from the RCN, nurses and other organisations including Unison.

Dr Carter said the RCN will pursue its calls for the NMC to produce a full financial audit of its business case for increasing the fees.

‘We need more information about how they got into this mess because if they do not know that, there is no guarantee that this situation will not be replicated in the future,’ he said.

External auditors KMPG conducted a review of the NMC business case for the fee increase, but the RCN believes a more comprehensive financial assessment is required, particularly to explore some of the cost assumptions around fitness to practise cases.

The NMC settled on the 32 per cent fee increase despite accepting a £20 million grant from the Department of Health.

The health watchdog had originally wanted £120 per registrant, which would have generated an income of £79.2 million based on 660,000 registrants. By increasing fees to £100 and accepting the £20 million DH grant, the NMC will receive £86 million.

An NMC spokesperson told Nursing Standard: ‘By accepting the grant and increasing the fees to £100, we will meet our six-month targets on adjudication and eliminate our historic fitness to practise caseload by the summer of 2014.’

Meanwhile, regulations have been laid before parliament that will reduce the size of the NMC council from 14 to 12 members. A DH report published last week revealed responses to the consultation about the proposed changes to the NMC constitution.

Health unions said a reduced council size must not threaten its ability to ensure sufficient diversity in the council.

The new constitution will come into force on May 1. www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/11/changes-constitution-nmc

BME NURSES MORE LIKELY THAN WHITE STAFF TO FACE NMC

Black African nurses are being referred disproportionately to the nursing regulator over their fitness to practise, according to the RCN.

RCN England director Tom Sandford told the college’s council last week about data he has compiled showing the number of black and minority ethnic (BME) members and non-BME members referred by employers to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).

He said that 16 per cent of registered nurses are BME, but they account for 25 per cent of referrals. ‘Our information shows that black nurses are 50 per cent more likely to be referred to the NMC than their white counterparts,’ he said.

The college’s employment relations caseload also indicated that its black nurse members are over-represented in disciplinary procedures in all nine regions, he said.

‘The good news is that people are using their trade union, but it suggests we have a significant amount of work to do with employers to change their behaviour.’

An NMC spokesperson said it is improving its data collection for both its register and those involved in fitness to practise proceedings so it can address concerns.

See analysis page 12

SAY NO TO NMC FEES RISE

NATHAN CLARKE

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