Hundreds continue to practise despite lapsed NMC registrations

By Jennifer Sprinks

More than 660 nurses have broken the law in the past two years by practising even though their registration has lapsed, according to the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

Latest figures from the NMC reveal that 332 of these individuals whose registration had lapsed last year applied for readmission to the register more than three months later. The same figure applies to 2012.

Under the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001, there is a legal requirement for practising nurses in the UK to be on the register. While the NMC cannot take action against anyone who is not on the register, it refers anyone it finds practising unregistered to the police.

To tackle the issue, the NMC writes to registrants 45 days before renewal is due, as well as to those who have let registration lapse – and their employers.

System delays
RCN senior legal officer Roz Hooper said some members have been suspended after their employers found out their registration had lapsed. She said safeguards and checks can mean readmissions to the register take time, and in some cases may lead to appeals.

‘Whenever a nurse’s registration lapses, it is really disruptive and can mean they are not able to practise for a while,’ she said. ‘When they reapply they might have a problem and may struggle to be readmitted.’

She said registration usually lapses because nurses have changed address and did not receive a renewal letter from the NMC, or their notification of practice form, which is required with every registration, gets lost in the post.

Ms Hooper speculated that some nurses may delay re-registering because of a criminal conviction such as drink driving.

However, the NMC revealed that lapsed registrations may be in decline, with just 30 registrations lapsing between January and February this year, compared with 79 during the same period in 2012. Since June 2011, nurses have been able to pay online by direct debit, making registration renewal easier. Later this year, it will also be possible to complete notification of practice forms online.

Meanwhile, more than 63,000 people have signed a petition against the NMC’s proposals to increase nurses’ registration fees from £100 to £120 next year. The council argues that the fee is necessary to cope with the rising cost of fitness to practise referrals. Last year, nurses’ fees rose from £76 to £100.

Go to epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/60164

CANCER SURVIVOR TO RUN MARATHON

Oncology nurse Mandy Holdsworth has recovered from bowel cancer – and is now in training for the London Marathon to raise money for the charity Beating Bowel Cancer.

She was diagnosed three years ago, had surgery to remove her tumour then chemotherapy.

Ms Holdsworth (pictured), who works at Worcestershire Royal Hospital, was a keen runner before her diagnosis and was back pounding the streets only six weeks after her surgery. But she has never run a marathon.

‘It was running that first made me aware I was anaemic and then that I had bowel cancer, because I was so breathless,’ she said. ‘I could barely run half a mile. Now I do everything to try to stay fit. I eat healthily and take exercise. Running empowers me to take control of my health.’

To donate go to www.justgiving.com/Mandy-Holdsworth