Cancer nurses need support
and investment urgently

The latest results of the National Cancer Patient Experience survey, which asks people about the care they received in 2022, made some enlightening, as well as sometimes difficult, reading. Of the 61,268 people who responded, just 78% said the amount of time they waited for their test results was okay and the same percentage said their results were explained in a way that they could fully understand.

A total of 70% said they were involved in decisions about their care when staying in hospital and just 64% said they could talk to hospital staff about their worries if needed. Worryingly, only 59% said the potential long-term effects of treatment were explained in a way they could understand.

In our news story ‘Cancer nurses at break point as quit rate hits ten-year high’ (page 6), Macmillan chief nursing officer Claire Taylor called for urgent action from government to boost nurse numbers in cancer care, warning that personalised care is being compromised.

The charity’s analysis of NHS figures has revealed that the quit-rate of healthcare staff is at a ten-year high, while waiting times for NHS patients are entering their tenth year of decline.

The timing of her message is crucial. The workforce needs to be supported and protected if the well-being and morale of staff is to remain intact.

There are many achievements for nurses to celebrate, however. This year marks the NHS turning 75 and in our celebratory feature ‘Nurses who inspired us: role models and mentors we won’t forget’ (page 18), nurses reflect on the people who have inspired them in their careers.

They remind us that despite all the challenges, nurses are the essential champions of patient care that remains accessible to all; we need to continue championing the fundamentals of nursing care to protect our NHS for the next 75 years and beyond.

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