Patient’s Choice

Meet this year’s finalists for the prestigious RCNi award

By Elaine Cole
managing editor, Nursing Standard
@prideinnursing

A public vote is under way to choose the winner of this category of the RCNi Nurse Awards 2018, in which patients nominate a nurse whose care has had an enormous impact on their lives. The five inspirational stories of excellent and compassionate care shortlisted for the Patient’s Choice award feature nurses from general practice, acute care and the community who have improved their patients’ lives and, in one case, helped them have a good death.

‘Dedicated renal unit team ensured I never felt alone’

Carmel McMonagle had her kidneys removed after a cancer diagnosis. She was on dialysis for seven years until husband Joe donated one of his kidneys to her four years ago.

‘It has been such a journey – without the home therapies team at Altnagelvin Area Hospital renal unit I don’t know how I would have coped,’ she says.

The couple, pictured above left, nominated Alison Cairns (right) and fellow renal home therapies team members Bridgeen Canning (centre) and Caroline McCloskey (second right), of Western Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland, for their dedication and commitment to patients.

‘When I was diagnosed I thought my life had ended,’ says Ms McMonagle. ‘But these nurses showed me I had a life to live. They enabled me to rule my dialysis rather than it rule me. When you get a diagnosis like mine you need someone in your corner, and with these nurses I was never alone. They are always at the end of the phone. I was able to do home dialysis because of their backup.’

Mr McMonagle says the team recognises that the whole family is affected and provides support for every member. The peer support group set up by the nurses to enable patients to share their experience, hopes and fears has been a great success.

‘These nurses showed me I had a life to live. They enabled me to rule my dialysis’

Carmel McMonagle

‘These nurses showed me I had a life to live. They enabled me to rule my dialysis’

Carmel McMonagle

Voting is open until 8 June and the winner will be announced at the RCNi Nurse Awards ceremony in London on 4 July. To vote, go to www.nurseawards.co.uk

‘Dedicated renal unit team ensured I never felt alone’

Carmel McMonagle had her kidneys removed after a cancer diagnosis. She was on dialysis for seven years until husband Joe donated one of his kidneys to her four years ago.

‘It has been such a journey – without the home therapies team at Altnagelvin Area Hospital renal unit I don’t know how I would have coped,’ she says.

The couple, pictured above left, nominated Alison Cairns (right) and fellow renal home therapies team members Bridgeen Canning (centre) and Caroline McCloskey (second right), of Western Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland, for their dedication and commitment to patients.

‘When I was diagnosed I thought my life had ended,’ says Ms McMonagle. ‘But these nurses showed me I had a life to live. They enabled me to rule my dialysis rather than it rule me. When you get a diagnosis like mine you need someone in your corner, and with these nurses I was never alone. They are always at the end of the phone. I was able to do home dialysis because of their backup.’

Mr McMonagle says the team recognises that the whole family is affected and provides support for every member. The peer support group set up by the nurses to enable patients to share their experience, hopes and fears has been a great success.

‘They organise fun days so patients and families get to know each other, as well as lifestyle and well-being courses and a remembrance service for those who have passed away due to organ failure,’ he says.

Alison Cairns says the team is ‘a bit overwhelmed’ to be nominated for such a prestigious award. ‘It is very humbling. It’s lovely to know we have made such a difference.’

For more pictures, go to rcni.com/finalist-Alison-Cairns
A ‘guardian angel’ committed to improving outcomes

Christopher Tyler was 50 when he was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. ‘My world fell apart,’ he recalls, ‘and I was in the wilderness wondering what the future might hold. I didn’t respond to medication, had a relatively young family and a business that I couldn’t drive forward. The NHS, and particularly nurse Jamilla Kausar, was my saviour.’

In February 2017 Mr Tyler was selected as a suitable patient for deep brain stimulation. The operation was a success but he faced a battle to map the implanted device with his DNA. Ms Kausar, a movements disorder surgery clinical nurse specialist in the neurosciences department of Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, has been his rock throughout the process.

‘It’s been a tortuous process of countless visits and adjustments for both the device and drug cocktails,’ says Mr Tyler, pictured above left with Ms Cassell and Mr Pacey. ‘This journey was only made possible with my guardian angel Jamilla, who works long and arduous hours, is always available on the phone and comes in on her days off to meet and comfort Parkinson’s patients.’

Mr Tyler also values the camaraderie that she has built among her patients. ‘We are more than patients to her. We owe our well-being to this gifted care provider.’

Ms Kausar says she is shocked to have been nominated. ‘It is so lovely. I thought the email had been sent to the wrong person – such a wonderful surprise.’

For our gallery of images, go to rcni.com/finalist-Jamilla-Kausar

Practice nurse’s boundless compassion in diabetes care

‘I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes four years ago and the stigma hit me hard,’ says Nicola Hayes. ‘News headlines were about the obesity epidemic. Shame kept my head buried in the sand. Then Catherine came along – kind, caring and patient and all that you would expect from a nurse.’

Ms Hayes and fellow patient Stephen Pacey have nominated their practice nurse Catherine Cassell, who works at Preston Grove Medical Centre in Somerset. ‘What I didn’t expect was her dogged determination to never give up on me,’ says Ms Hayes, pictured above left with Ms Cassell and Mr Pacey.

‘Catherine saved my life. It sounds dramatic, but it’s true. Her love of the job and the compassion she has for her patients is boundless.’

Ms Hayes says her nurse constantly looks for ways to inspire and guide her patients. ‘She gives her time freely, going the extra mile, particularly when things seem bleak. I have cried with her, sworn, laughed. I have never been judged by her, never turned away and never told to sort myself out.

‘My blood sugars have reduced from an average of 18 to nine. My HbA1C has reduced from 101 to 60. I have lost three stone.’

Mr Pacey has lost eight stone in the past year after being referred when overweight and pre-diabetic. ‘I have resolved my pre-diabetes,’ he says. ‘Catherine has displayed enthusiasm and empathy that has made me willing to listen and act.’

Both patients also value the peer support group she has set up, which is open to patients from other surgeries.

Ms Cassell says she is ‘elated’ to be nominated. ‘I feel like a winner already because my patients have put me forward. I’ve been nursing for 28 years so to get this now is overwhelming.’

For more pictures, go to rcni.com/finalist-Catherine-Cassell

For our gallery of images, go to rcni.com/finalist-Catherine-Cassell
Nurse enables patients to escape the cycle of self-harm

A woman whose self-harm made her a frequent visitor to A&E has nominated ‘flexible, motivational, empowering and caring nurse’ Jill Whibley. The patient, who wants to remain anonymous because her family does not know about her mental health problems, has been seeing Ms Whibley, the frequent service user manager at Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, for a year.

Ms Whibley works with people identified as having high attendance at A&E to understand their underlying needs. ‘Many patients Jill sees, including myself, have mental health issues and self-harm by cutting,’ says the patient.

‘Jill is such a good listener and has many ideas around signposting. In the past I had nowhere to turn. Now I know I can contact Jill. ‘Self-harm is such a difficult area for many to understand and respond to, yet I feel Jill gets it. She is available early and late on some days, which fits in when patients feel vulnerable out of hours. She takes clients to places that provide an alternative to A&E.’

The patient credits Ms Whibley’s dedication and nursing experience for her success. Since meeting Ms Whibley, she has significantly reduced her self-harming, gained promotion at work and accessed private psychological help. ‘I haven’t been to A&E since December 2016. I have not had a day off sick in 12 months. She understands that other services discharge quickly, which can lead to this cycle of people feeling they have nowhere to turn and so ending up in A&E again.’

Ms Whibley says she is touched that her patient took the time to nominate her. ‘I feel humbled to read that she thinks I have made such a difference – she has done so well herself.’

For more pictures, go to rcni.com/finalist-Jill-Whibley

‘Cancer team helped my dying daughter live life to the full’

A professor of nursing has nominated the nurses who looked after her 24-year-old daughter from the time of her colorectal cancer diagnosis until she died 14 months later.

Fiona Irvine says the care given to Primrose by the team at the teenage and young adult unit at Clatterbridge Cancer Centre in the Wirral was outstanding. Professor Irvine, pictured above, seated left with clinical nurse specialist Lucy Jane Taylor and, standing from left, senior staff nurses Natalie Jones, Joanne Connell, Luke Millward-Browning and Sarah Smith, says they and fellow senior staff nurse Charlotte Edgar were confident and highly skilled in the delivery of care.

‘They treated Prim with respect, sought and valued her opinion on her care, and ensured that her dignity was not compromised,’ says Professor Irvine, head of nursing at the University of Birmingham. ‘There were times that Primrose was in extreme and unmanageable pain and the level of compassion demonstrated by the nurses was exceptional.’

In the year after her diagnosis Primrose got married, spent time out with friends and travelled abroad – all accomplished because of the team’s support. ‘They completely understood her need to live life to the full and were highly flexible about fitting in chemo and visiting her at home.’

‘They helped to ensure that the quality of my daughter’s life was the best it could be’

Fiona Irvine

For our gallery of images, go to rcni.com/finalist-Lucy-Jane-Taylor

66 / May 2018 / volume 33 number 2