JANE BATES

Advice to walk like a penguin didn’t go down well

I was on leave in the week of the big freeze, and it left me feeling frustrated. Travel disruption, the cancellation of a much-anticipated jolly with some old nursing friends and the postponement of a big charity event we had been planning for months – all on account of the weather.

But the greatest disappointment of all was that no one I knew took up the latest health advice to walk like a penguin. To avoid broken hips and wrists, we were told, older folk should think Antarctic and channel its birdlife – arms out to the side, feet flat on the ground and a rolling waddle.

‘Thank goodness they are telling us to wrap up warm,’ one older patient said. ‘I never would have thought of that myself.’

I tried it myself, but as no one flung me a dead herring I must have failed to get the motion right.

Health advice, often aimed at the elderly, almost inevitably ends up the subject of derision. I sometimes wonder if that’s what it’s for, to cheer us up in testing times.

‘Thank goodness they are telling us to wrap up and stay warm,’ one older patient said. ‘I never would have thought of that myself.’ This generation could never be called ‘snowflakes’ – they have lived through far harsher winters than we are used to now, and know all too well how to cope when the chill sets in.

Never mind teaching your grandmother to suck eggs. Telling her to put on an extra woolly and walk like a penguin was never going to go down well.

Jane Bates is an ophthalmic nurse in Hampshire

READERS’ PANEL

Is a 6.5% increase enough to ease the recruitment and retention crisis?

It seems a bit churlish to be sceptical when the government has finally agreed to a nursing pay rise, and any increase is welcome. But nurses are still worse off in real terms when you factor in the scrapping of the bursary, years of the pay cap, and rising inflation and housing and travel costs. This is a great PR exercise for the Conservatives, but whether it will be enough to tackle the recruitment and retention crisis remains to be seen.

Liz Charalambous is a staff nurse and PhD student in Nottingham
"@lizcharalambou

The combined efforts of 13 unions have won us a paltry 6.5% – less than half of what has been lost in real terms due to pay restraint. This offer is disappointing to say the least, but pay is only part of the problem; just one in six nurses leaving the profession cite pay as a concern. Nurses are at breaking point due to the pressures in healthcare and this poor pay offer could be the straw that breaks the camel’s back.

Grant Byrne is a nursing student in Edinburgh
"@GGByrne

I trust that the unions, including the RCN, have done all they can to reach an acceptable deal with the government to address the shortfall in nurses’ pay. Although this does not address the total real-terms loss nurses have experienced, at least it is a positive step and comes without changes to annual leave entitlements or unsocial hours payments. But work still needs to be done to tackle other shortfalls in nursing pay, such as loss of holiday pay from nursing banks.

Rachel Kent is a mental health nurse in London

The pay rise will be phased in over three years, and only the first instalment will be above inflation. For many nurses like me, the increase will not restore the 14% fall in our salary since 2010, nor will it ease our heavy workloads and stressful working days. It won’t return bursaries for nursing students or fill the 40,000 empty nursing posts we currently have, and is very unlikely to encourage nurses back into the NHS.

Drew Payne is a community staff nurse in London
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