SUE LARNER reports from the 36th annual meeting of the International Continence Society held on 27 November to 1 December 2006 in Christchurch, New Zealand.

36th International Continence Society annual meeting

I was in the very fortunate position to be able to attend the above conference through the generosity of a number of sponsors, including the RCN outpatient nurses’ bursary scheme.

I work in the Women’s Centre at the Oxford Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford as outpatient sister and in the dual role of urogynaecology nurse practitioner.

After a very long flight and while still recovering from jetlag, I launched myself with enthusiasm into all the conference had to offer. The first two days were filled with workshops which included:

- Revisiting the theory on bladder training and voiding programmes
  This workshop presented an overview of the current evidence for bladder training. The presentation identified what was known about these approaches for the management of urinary incontinence in adults and identified the gaps. It explored the issues associated with the implementation and sustainability of bladder training and voiding programmes.

- Nursing management and treatment of overactive bladder symptoms
  This workshop described the neurophysiology of the overactive bladder. It provided a critical analysis of research evidence for the role of drug therapies for overactive bladder. We were able to evaluate and debate research evidence for conservative therapies used in overactive bladder.

- Good urodynamic practice: standardisation and quality control in measurement and data analysis
  This looked at good urodynamic practices, uroflowmetry, filling cystometry and pressure-flow studies.

The next three days were made up of the scientific programme. This consisted of many topics – pregnancy and childbirth, basic physiology, quality of life, clinical practice, pelvic floor function and dysfunction to name just a few. There were also over 200 poster presentations to look at.

I met many interesting people from all parts of the world and visited a nurse in her own outpatient department in Wellington. It was interesting to look around and see the design of the facilities and share our experiences. It was reassuring that nurses faced exactly the same problems that we do in the UK in terms of staffing, skill mix and so on. I feel I have learnt a great deal and would encourage anybody who has an opportunity like this to grasp it.

I would like to thank the RCN Outpatient Nurses Forum for the financial support which they were able to give me.

Sue Larner
Dear colleagues,

Our annual conference, held on 25 November 2006, proved to be a tremendous success. The speakers presented on a range of subjects, and included a moving patient’s view of the services provided by the NHS. Presentations are available on our website www.rcn.org.uk/outpatients

Delegate numbers were lower than in previous years, perhaps a reflection of the financial difficulties experienced by a number of trusts, but those who attended were commendably interactive in the proceedings. I am pleased to say that several of the delegates were successful in their application to the forum’s bursary scheme, and I would encourage applications for future events.

Our forum continues to work in the background, with a commitment to promoting the image of outpatient nursing as a specialism, developing roles, and working to prevent the erosion of the function of trained nurses in outpatient settings. Our skill mix review will help nurses and managers with this.

Some of our forum committee members will be attending the RCN Congress in Harrogate in April. It is a very busy week, with a number of excellent learning opportunities. I would encourage all our forum members to attend, even for one day, as it is an opportunity to see firsthand how the RCN functions. It is also completely free to RCN members. Please feel free to contact any of the forum committee if you wish to go, as we would be very pleased to meet up with you.

Remember that our conference will again take place in November this year. Look out for the flyers a little later in the year.

Mark Morrison

RCN Outpatients Nurses Forum Conference

I was lucky enough to attend my third RCN Outpatients Nurses Forum Conference. It is something I look forward to, meeting up with like-minded nurses and discussing all aspects of outpatient nursing, and I did not expect this year to be any different. Looking at the programme for the day there was some nostalgia – no BJ to open the conference and a new chairman to take the reins of us outpatient nurses.

Having travelled down from Aberdeen it was amusing that myself and my colleague met up with the nurses from Elgin Outpatients. Although we hail from the same part of the world we rarely have the change to meet and so this was a great opportunity to share current issues.

As the day progressed (good timing by the new Chair), the speakers were great in capturing our attention. However, I was not prepared for ‘The patient’s journey’ by Eileen Green. This wonderful, expressive and entertaining woman showed me outpatients and the NHS through her experiences. I was laughing with her (not too unusual for the conference as we outpatient nurses do have a good sense of humour or why would we do the job we do?). What I did not expect or prepare for was when Eileen reduced me to tears. Her journey and experiences will remain with me for the rest of my nursing career. Her act was hard to follow but to give him his due Dr Bishop knew exactly how to get the nurses on his side – by telling us we are usually right about patients and their symptoms. Again, much hilarity and real confirmation of the good job nurses do in outpatients.

The day ended with ‘Staffing issues in OPD’ – unfortunately this did not tell us anything we did not know. However, it has given me the desire to take this further and have a serious look at the nursing models we can use in outpatients – and I don’t mean the page 3 kind!

This was one of the best conferences I have been to and I’m looking forward to the next one. Mark Morrison’s first conference – well done and how will you top it, I wonder?

Nicola Nesbitt, Sister, Outpatients, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary

Nicola was given financial support by the RCN outpatient bursary scheme to attend the conference.

Eight leading nursing journals now available online

Log on to the members’ area of RCN Online at www.rcn.org.uk and you can access eight of the world’s leading nursing journals free online, including Nursing Standard, Nurse Researcher, Nursing Management and American Journal of Nursing.
JUDITH CARTER, Chair of COPSIG, outlines the forthcoming study day which will take place on 28 April.

COPSIG 2007

Plans are now well under way for this year’s study day, which will take place in Cowdray Hall, RCN Headquarters on Saturday 28 April. Once again, we hope to have an interesting array of speakers, including patients, nurses and doctors, and hope that you will encourage all those who work with children in outpatients settings to join us for the day. Remember, RCN HQ is very handy for Oxford Street, so why not make a weekend of it? Once again, we have kept the cost as low as possible, at just £50 per person, as we recognise that many nurses are now self-funding.

Application forms are now available on the RCN website www.rcn.org.uk/outpatients, as is the provisional programme. Please help to share this information with your colleagues.

As with many other specialties, the numbers of nurses able to be involved in organising these events is quite small, and we would welcome input from anyone with an interest in this field. Please feel able to contact me with any comments or queries.

Hoping to see many of you in April.

Judith Carter, Chair COPSIG

We would be more than happy to hear from anyone who would like to be involved on the committee (usually meeting every three months in London). If you are interested, please contact Judith Carter, Children’s Outpatients, Royal Blackburn Hospital, Blackburn, BB2 3HH, telephone 01254 678087 for further information.

Letter from the Editor

Dear colleagues,

As we march closer to year end I hope you are all managing to keep your heads above water in the increasingly difficult financial climate we find ourselves in. We continue to hear of the spectre of redundancy facing many nurses across the country. We do need to hear your stories so please get in touch. Any information will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

We have been sad to hear of the demise of the Day Surgery Forum after the last Steering Committee elections. Many staff working in outpatients have historically had a close affinity to staff working in a day case environment. To this end the forum is seeking a day surgery representative to link in with the Outpatient Nurses Forum to ensure we can work in partnership to address common concerns and share knowledge. If you know anyone who would be interested then please get in touch.

On a separate note I was delighted to have an enquiry left on my answer phone from a forum member a couple of months back but unfortunately my answer phone managed to mangle the recording! I think the enquiry was in relation to the skill mix tool but if you were that person please accept my apologies and give me another call to discuss how the forum can help you.

Sue Barnden
JOANNE QUINN was delighted to attend the World Diabetes Congress in Cape Town last year and provides an outline of her experience.

19th World Diabetes Congress

The opportunity to attend the World Diabetes Congress in Cape Town on 3–7 December last year was one I could not turn down! I was one of four nurses chosen from Northern Ireland and sponsored fully by a pharmaceutical company. I was also fortunate to get 50 per cent of my time as study leave.

We met with 30 other diabetes specialist nurses in Dublin and flew directly to Cape Town where we had a full itinerary planned. The setting was stunning and it was a wonderful opportunity to meet and share ideas with other nurses from around Ireland and the rest of the world.

We attended lectures every day and also had an organised trip to the Guguleto Township and Redcross Children's Hospital. A campaign by the pharmaceutical company had raised £9,000 which we presented to the township hospital. It was a very humbling experience to visit the hospitals where, despite very few resources, they seemed to provide a very good service to the local community. In the outpatients department patients had to queue for hours to wait for supplies of drugs and insulin. The nurses there had some equipment to measure blood pressure and blood glucose although no bloods were sent for laboratory testing. To see the clinics operating with such limited equipment encouraged us to reflect on our own practice at home and consider whether we always put our own resources to the best use.

As a group, we were able to discuss our own practice and use of resources within our departments and each of us came away with at least one new idea for service development.

From a personal point of view the trip certainly made me take a fresh look at my own practice and I hope to introduce new ideas, for example, a more structured pre-pregnancy diabetes clinic within our department.

Overall, this was a fabulous experience and I would like to thank everyone who made the trip possible.

Joanne Quinn, Clinic Sister, Regional Endocrinology & Diabetes Centre, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

Request for information

I understand there is no longer a Liverpool Outpatient Nurses Group so can anyone point me in the direction of any other local outpatient groups in the northwest area that I can link into? I’m interested in meeting up with like-minded people to share ideas and hopefully solutions!

If you are interested or can help please get in touch.

Elizabeth Sawyer, Senior Nurse, Outpatients, Noble’s Hospital, Isle of Man. Email: elizabeth.sawyer@gov.im Tel: 01624 650416.

Health information from DPP

Developing Patient Partnerships (DPP) is a charity partly funded by the Department of Health. Specialising in health information, DPP produces a growing range of unbiased high quality, user-tested leaflets, booklets and posters designed to meet the needs of patients and nurses.

Covering a wide range of topics – from heart health to minor ailments, missed appointments to COPD – DPP provides health information packages to GP surgeries, primary care organisations, hospital trusts, walk-in-centres, minor injury units and other interested organisations. All the health information resources are road tested by members of the public, go through a rigorous consultation process with an expert medical panel and translations are available in key languages.

To find out more, visit www.dpp.org.uk or call 020 7383 6824

Winifred Raphael Memorial Lecture 2007

A Short History of Nursing Ethics
Speaker: Professor Martin Johnson
Time: 7:00–8:00 pm
Date: 16 October 2007
Venue: Mumford Theatre
Anglia Ruskin University
Cambridge
Free Admission
Registration: Jenifer Caveney
Tel: 0161 237 2049
Email: jenifer.caveney@rcn.org.uk

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