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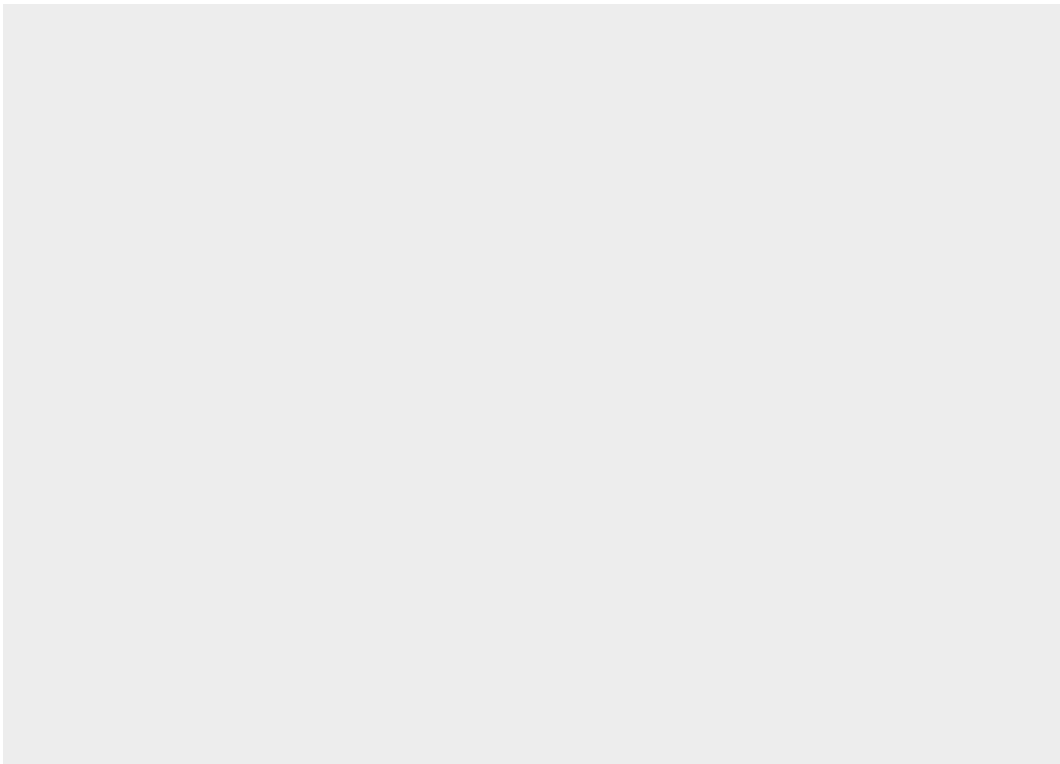
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SPRING 2018

FOR NURSING STUDENTS ACROSS THE UK

REA ON O MILE

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The response to this post varied, with some comments suggesting the student just get on with the job and others recommending they refuse and report it to their mentor. So what should you do if you find yourself in a similar situation?

The official line

Breaking barriers

The good news is the number of men in nursing is rising. The bad news is not by much – up from 10% of registered nurses in 2014 to 11% in 2016.

So what, you might ask? Men's dominant role in other industries suggests that professions where women form the majority offer some balance. In nursing, however, that argument is perhaps less persuasive.

At Congress in May, one agenda item will call on the RCN to attract more men into nursing. The thinking is that the workforce should match the profile of the population.

Steering clear

Stereotypes, low pay and perceptions of care-giving as "women's work" are among the suggested reasons why men have steered clear. They weren't allowed to join the professional register until the 1950s and their numbers have grown only slowly since. It wasn't until 1960 that men were able to join the RCN.

Some universities are stepping up efforts to broaden nursing's appeal. Edinburgh Napier University, for example, has run recruitment events with a focus on encouraging men to apply.

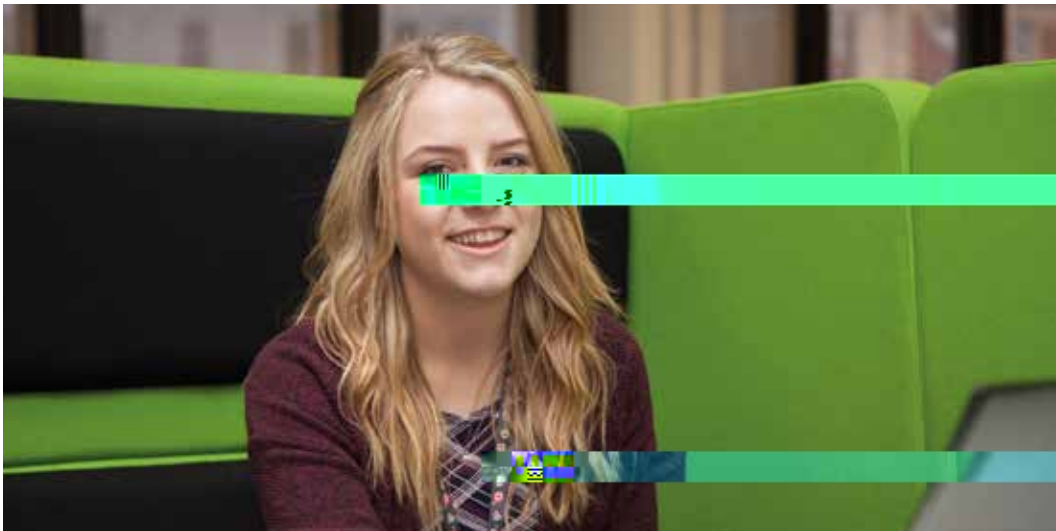
Queen's University Belfast works with schools in an attempt to make nursing more appealing to boys. Professor Donna Fitzsimons, Head of the School of Nursing and

Midwifery, says the university has also introduced the "multiple mini interview" (MMI) format, which uses several assessments and case-based scenarios to assess candidates' suitability.

"I think we all recognise that good communication, caring and empathy are equally distributed but sometimes women can feel

Reason to smile

Few people like going to the dentist, but for some the experience can cause great anxiety. One student nurse has been helping people with learning disabilities overcome their fears



"I can't imagine doing anything other than being a learning disability nurse," says Tyler Payne, who was named RCN Wales Student Nurse of the Year 2017.

Tyler, now in the final year of her nursing degree, is committed to working with people with learning disabilities after her own personal experience. "My mum died when I was quite young and I've been a carer, along with my dad, to my big brother who has autism and

learning disabilities. He's my best mate and my inspiration. Seeing how far he's come and how he's overcome things is why I was drawn to this area of nursing."

Tyler has helped run a youth club for people with learning disabilities in her home town in Carmarthenshire for years. And more recently, she designed a dental desensitisation kit for people with a phobia of dentists, which also contributed to her RCN award win.

The idea started after a placement with a community team where staff were using a desensitisation tool which improved the number of blood tests they had been able to get from patients with learning disabilities. Tyler's second year assignment was developing health promotion and this was where her idea for a desensitisation kit came in.

"It's common that people with learning disabilities, and especially people with Down's Syndrome, are prone to having



dental health conditions and anxiety about the dentist," says Tyler. "I visited a local dentist who confirmed that people with learning disabilities do have more issues accessing dental care and are scared of going."

Tyler took simple dental implements; a cup, latex gloves and dental tools, and also filmed the journey to a dentist so that someone could see the inside of a dental practice, from the corridor to sitting in the dentist chair. "I did a voice-over for the film, which also has text, so someone will have a very clear idea of what happens when they visit."

Tyler put the film on a USB stick shaped like a tooth and together with the dental instruments she had the beginnings of her kit. "I tried using it myself with someone with learning disabilities and it worked really well."

The tools help people to get familiar with what is used at the dentist and the film talks through what will happen to ease anxiety.

"The kit isn't just for people with learning disabilities, it can be used for anyone with a phobia of the dentist. It cost £7 to put together the kit, which is much less than a hospital admission and general anaesthetic if a problem becomes severe."

Tyler has been using one kit so far, but hopes the idea will be picked up by other trusts who can invest in it as a preventative measure.

As for the future for Tyler, after she graduates later this year, she has a job lined up working with in-patients who have learning disabilities and associated mental health and physical health issues.

"I know it's something that gets said a lot, but I just want to work in an area where I can make the most difference," she adds.

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I can't imagine doing anything other than being a learning disability nurse

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Always think sepsis

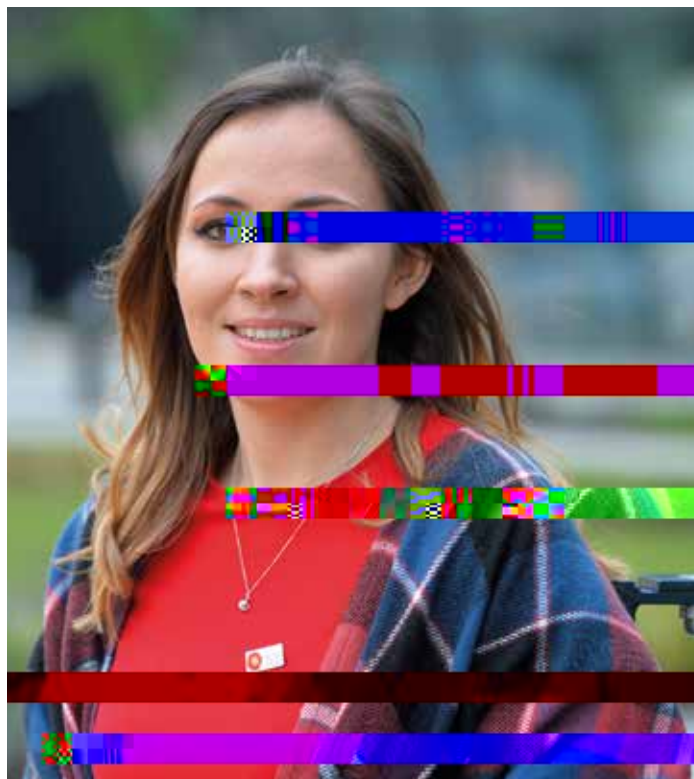
Nursing student Katie Dutton reflects on how a near-fatal scrape with sepsis inspired her to increase awareness of it

Two years ago I contracted sepsis while in hospital being treated for a kidney infection and nearly died. It was a pivotal moment in my life, solidifying my desire to become a nurse. No more doubts, this was what I wanted to do. I even applied for the access to nursing course from my hospital bed.

My story begins when I was transferred from one hospital to another for my treatment and around this time my PICC (peripherally inserted central catheter) line got infected. Within a week I started to hallucinate, I had no idea where I was, and my temperature was 40.1C. The last thing I remember until I got better was waiting in a theatre thinking I was going to die.

Fear and hope

I was panicky and suffered with anxiety for a long time afterwards, terrified I hadn't actually been properly cured of sepsis and it was going to come back. The recovery was difficult but in time I got fully better. Despite it being



a horrific experience I was determined not to let it beat me and to make an example of it. I feel incredibly lucky to be alive and am passionate about fighting to improve sepsis care.

As a student nurse I feel I now have a better understanding

of how understaffed many hospitals are and how mistakes can be made. As students we can learn as much from bad practice as from good practice and I want to use what I learned from the experience to help make things better for others in future.

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We can learn as much from bad practice as from good practice

Earlier this year, fellow student Kylie-Ann Johnson and I led a sepsis awareness event for more than 100 nursing students at our university – De Montfort University in Leicester. It included a talk from a sepsis nurse and highlighted how to spot and prevent sepsis. We were overwhelmed by how popular it was.

The university is now making it an annual event. Many students said it made them feel more confident about spotting the signs of sepsis, which is exactly what I hoped for. It would be great if other universities catch on to the idea and it inspired more sepsis awareness events.

Fresh faces

Student nurses are the fresh faces of the NHS. We have to be confident going out into practice and being able to recognise sepsis. It's so important to me that students – and all nursing staff – are up to speed on the condition. We all need to be thinking “is this sepsis?” on a regular basis. This is how we can help save lives.

The thing with sepsis is that it needs to be treated fast – antibiotic treatment should ideally start within an hour of diagnosis to reduce the risk of serious complications or death. For this reason nursing staff and students can play a key role in helping prevent cases like mine happening by helping spot the signs early on.

I'd encourage other students to hold similar events if they feel passionately about something – not just sepsis. The first thing I did was to approach the module



leader to sound them out and it developed from there. If you believe in something, you should just go for it. Ask the questions, be proactive. Students can often lack confidence but just think how many good ideas there are out there that with a little encouragement could be turned into reality.

What is sepsis?

Sepsis is a condition that arises when the body's response to an infection causes it to attack its own tissues.

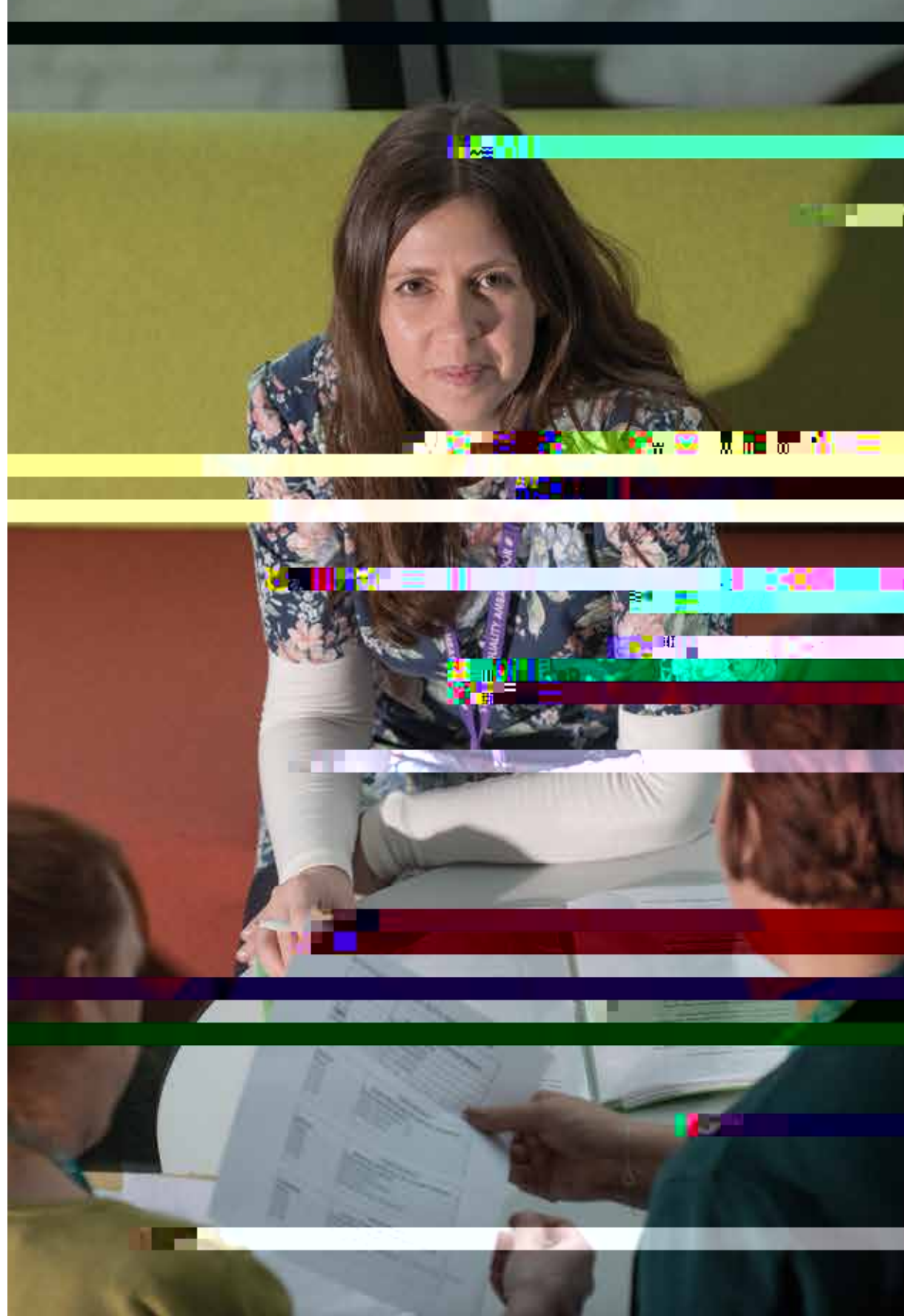
Talk through the taboo

Nursing student Catherine Hind has created resources to help health care staff support people in distress. Here she writes about how vital it is to keep having the difficult conversations

When I started studying to be a nurse I naively expected to receive guidance on how to provide emotional support – especially for people who are extremely distressed, suicidal or self-harming.

I quickly found this was not the case. As a mental health nursing student and a volunteer for the Samaritans for more than three years, it's an area I am passionate about.

The numbers speak for themselves. The Samaritans report that there were 6,639 suicides in the UK in 2015 and according to the Royal College of Psychiatrists, one in 10 people self-harm. With these figures on the rise there



A hard day's night

The reality of delivering 24-hour health care means many nursing staff are required to work night shifts. Student nurse Chloe Taylor shares her top tips for surviving them

1 Prepare yourself

Try to get some good sleep the night before to make sure you are as well rested as possible. If my shift starts at 9pm, I try to have a two-hour nap in the afternoon. Remember to keep your room cool, dark and put your phone away to reduce distractions. Only use it for your alarm if needed.

2 Bring snacks

I find small healthy snacks work best as a big meal can make me feel sleepy. They allow me to gain sparks of energy during a night shift, especially when I start having my 4am crash.

3 Stay active

Resist the temptation to sit down during the quieter periods. Instead – keep on the move. Trust me it helps!

4 Get to know your patients

Night shifts can be a valuable time to introduce yourself to patients, look through their medical notes and check in with them. If some of my patients are still in their chair waiting to go to bed, I like to help the health care assistants get them prepared.

5 Check and review care plans

Between answering call bells, new admissions and a busy nursing station, it can be quite hard to find the time to review care plans. With the whole night ahead, why not use some of the time to review them and ensure they're all up to date and everything is in order? It will earn you brownie points and improve your knowledge and confidence.

6 Practice skills

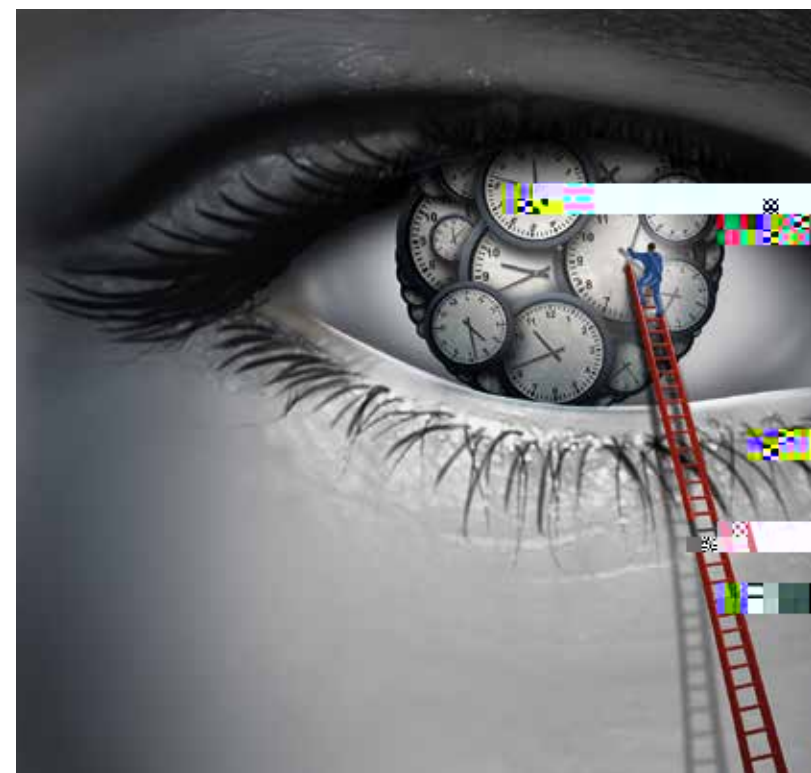
Night shifts are a good opportunity to ease your way into management. If you're starting off, just ask the mentor or staff nurse you're with for the night if you can have a go at managing a patient or two. Once you've tackled this you may want to ask for more the following night.

7 Remember H₂O

I love a coffee but the most important thing is to stay hydrated as this can help with alertness. Make sure you drink a lot of water to get you through the night.

8 Reflect

As a student you could consider using the quieter times on shift as an opportunity to reflect on your current placement and document your learning.



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Small healthy snacks are best as a big meal can make you feel sleepy

i Safety first

The RCN has guidance on the occupational health and safety of shift workers called *Shift Work*. It offers advice on all aspects of shift work including preparing for a night shift and what nursing staff should expect from their employers.

Regarding getting home safely it says: “The end of a night shift is recognised as a high-risk period for car accidents – particularly

towards the end of a few back-to-back shifts. If you are dependent on a car to get you to and from work then be vigilant to the risks of fatigue. If you do feel yourself falling asleep at the wheel then pull off the road if it is safe to do so and have a short nap.

“Avoid driving for a long period or a long distance after a period of night shifts or long working hours. While it may be tempting to travel directly to visit family and friends and spend your days off with them, it would be advisable to have a rest or sleep first and travel later in the day.”

A conversation with... 



Lucy Mason
RCN Professional Nursing Committee

Where do you work?
I'm currently finishing my third year in children's nursing at the University of Birmingham. I'm due to graduate in August and then I hope to work in neonatal intensive care.

Why did you want to get involved with the RCN Professional Nursing Committee?
The RCN has such a prominent and busy trade union side, particularly in recent times, and its professional side isn't always represented as well as it could be. I wanted to help develop this.

What does the committee hope to achieve?
The committee is made up of people from all different areas and specialties and there's going to be a big focus on promoting and developing the RCN's professional work. As for my role, I hope I can be a fresh pair of eyes and be representative of newly registered nurses and students who aren't yet necessarily within a particular specialty but have a general interest across all professional issues.

What are you looking forward to at Congress?
The debate on staff having water bottles in clinical areas has really caught my eye! It's something I've actually struggled with before on placements, not being able to have a water bottle with me. We teach self-care to our patients but then don't practise it ourselves. For me, seeing nurses hydrate themselves is a great way to act as role models in this regard, rather than something that should be considered "unprofessional".

Set to thrive

Alongside the Professional Nursing Committee (see left) there is also the newly formed Trade Union Committee. This committee is also accountable to RCN Council and will make decisions on its behalf on all the trade union functions and activities of the RCN. Your student representative is Katharine Youngs (pictured right). Look out for an interview with Katharine in the next issue. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/governance

Making a difference











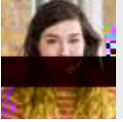


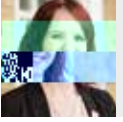



Do you want to develop influencing skills while doing your nursing degree? Why not consider becoming an RCN Student Information Officer (SIO)? SIOs are nursing students who work closely with the RCN to support and share information with fellow nursing students. It's a role you can do without having to take vast amounts of time away from your studies, but has wide-ranging benefits. Go to www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved-student

Your RCN Students Committee

Representing you

 Charlotte Hall (Chair) Student Member of Council	 Lucy Mason Professional Nursing Committee Member	 Katharine Youngs Trade Union Committee Member
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Country and regional representatives

 Laura Bird Eastern	 Kelly Hitchcock East Midlands	 Georgina Ledwith (Vice Chair) London
 Lyndsey Firth Northern	 Mark Lavery Northern Ireland	 Simon Mackey Northern Ireland
 Lee Holden-Levett North West	 Craig Davidson Scotland	 Ellie Jolley Scotland
 Beth Salmon South East	 Jodie Ashford South West	 Alice Duncan Wales
 Matthew Thomas Wales	 Sophie Lynn West Midlands	 Rhys Mood Yorkshire & the Humber

What does the committee do?

The RCN Students Committee is run by students for students, and makes the student voice heard on the issues that matter to you. The committee reports directly to RCN Council – the RCN's governing body, which provides leadership and direction for the organisation, helping to shape the future.

Get in touch

Contact your student committee representative via students@rcn.org.uk