

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



This will be my last Chairman's letter and I had thought to try to find something new and interesting to write about. But what to write about? I usually look for inspiration in my work or in the nursing press but nothing seems to stir me there. I was at RCN Congress at the beginning of April and while a lot went on there, not much was of relevance to our area of work. There was talk of re-empowering ward managers and making them responsible for their budgets and for domestic services. I for one will welcome this, as I have recently been told that I am not allowed to use staff from Domestic Services to scrub my Theatres as I don't have the budget! It seems ironic that nurses can be attacked in the *Daily Telegraph* for poor standards, are blamed for the state of their wards and the rise of so called "super-bugs" and yet are prevented from taking simple effective measures to reduce the incidence of infection in the operating department. Admittedly, my nursing auxiliaries are expected to do this as part of their job but they are too busy filling the spaces left by vacancies amongst trained staff, largely as a result of short-sighted decisions to not fill posts when staff leave, so as to save money. My Trust has finally recognised that in Theatre this policy merely results in the greater use of agency staff, at much greater cost. They are allowing me to replace staff and actually increase my establishment but not enough to enable my support staff to do the work they are contracted to do.

One thing which crossed my desk recently did give me inspiration but on a subject I had not intended to discuss this time, that is, registration of ODPs. I have written about this on a number of occasions, calling for all ODPs to be on a statutory register. It seems that the clarion calls from many people have finally been heard! The

NHS Executive is now advising all employers to only fill vacant ODP posts with staff who are on the AODP register. It also advises employers to encourage existing employees who are not yet registered to do so within the next twelve months. This must be seen as encouraging, as in the past, with other professions, this has been a precursor to statutory registration. The AODP Code of Conduct bears more than a passing resemblance to that of the UKCC and the Executive of AODP already suspend members from their register. At present this is only a paper exercise but one hopes that the action by the NHS executive will soon result in this action actually having teeth.

This is the last journal before Conference, plans for which are well advanced. A varied and interesting programme has been arranged once again, including Sue Norman, Chief Executive of the UKCC and Professor Archie Brain, inventor of the Laryngeal Mask Airway to open Conference on Tuesday 20th June. I hope that as many of you as possible are able to attend. Conference is worth the modest sum we charge, so go and badger your budget holder (my staff ignore this bit!!) and get him or her to fund you for the two days. See you there.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike" followed by a stylized flourish.

Mike

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