

The RCN Public Health Forum held their second public health conference at Warwick University on 21st March. The conference, which was entitled 'Contacts that Count' provided an update on the key issues in public health nursing and provided tools to deliver better patient outcomes.

The Public Health Forum will be holding its annual Strategy Planning meeting on 9th June. The purpose of this will be to consider the work to be undertaken by the forum in the forthcoming year and to agree priority work streams, including development of the intranet for RCN members and a review of communications. We will also consider the feedback from the public health conference and review how the needs of the various public health specialisms can be represented.

A number of queries from RCN Direct were supported by the occupational health nursing members of the public health forum over the last quarter. Enquiries were about a range of occupational health issues, including asbestos medicals, records management, nurses signing fit notes, and health surveillance.

Helen Kirk, who is the Head of Occupational Health Transition at Public Health England, and a member of the Public Health Forum Steering Committee continues to represent the RCN at the Council for Work and Health.

The RCN has been involved in a number of stakeholder events in relation to the Department for Work and Pensions proposed Health and Work Service. The service which is due to commence in England in Autumn 2014 is currently at the tender stage and the RCN will continue to seek opportunities to engage where appropriate, in representing the views of its members who may have a role to play in the delivery of this service.

RCN UK Safety Representatives' Conference, will be held on 4 October 2013. The Safety Representative's Committee are currently working on a number of projects including the development of a learning resource for sharps prevention and a health and wellbeing toolkit for safety representatives.

The RCN is making changes to its indemnity scheme for members. From 1 July 2014, work undertaken by employed RCN members is excluded from the scheme's coverage. This change will prevent employers moving the burden of risk onto their staff and the RCN, and will stop the college from inadvertently subsidising under-performing employers. The move will ensure that employers take responsibility for the environment of care, providing safe systems for its delivery.

The RCN has updated its guidance on sharps safety to reflect the requirements of the Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare Regulations 2013) which came into force in May 2013. The RCN has a long history of campaigning for improved protection for nursing staff exposed to the risk of needle stick and other sharps injuries. Download Sharps Safety from [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications).

The RCN has recently published guidance on 'The Management of Waste from Health, Personal and Social Care'. This was driven by the need to reduce environmental impact and comply with waste regulations and other regulatory standards such as the Health and Social Care Act 2008: Code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance. This guidance uses practical examples to support health care workers to properly manage the waste produced as part of their role and it recognises the different requirements that arise as a result of the devolved UK health care systems.

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