



Nursing goes back to school

Carol Groome and Mim Claridge visited a local school to promote modern nursing, part of our campaign and a theme of this year's Nurses' Day

ONE OF the best bits of being a children's nurse is that you can get away with playing games with your patients. I set off with Mim Claridge, a hospital play specialist, for Fernwood school, in the Bedfordshire countryside, to talk about modern nursing to a group of seven and eight year olds thinking 'they are only children'.

As we left the car the noise of playtime reminded us that these were active, noisy, exuberant, healthy children, not like those we had left on the ward.

Nursing the Future

Nursing the Future is our year-long campaign to enhance the image and reputation of nursing and midwifery in the UK. With the help of our readers, we aim to rebrand the image of nurses and midwives for the 21st century. We will encourage readers to publicise what they do and celebrate all that is dynamic, complex and challenging about the professions. We will profile excellence and highlight some of the daily success stories of modern day nursing and midwifery. We aim to make 2004 a year for nursing and midwifery. Join us in nursing the future...

Campaign aims

- To enhance the image and reputation of nursing and midwifery.
- To challenge and dispel misconceptions about nursing and midwifery.
- To empower nurses and midwives to publicise what they do.
- To encourage nurses and midwives to 'sell' or talk up their professions to future generations.
- To raise the public voice and profile of nurses and midwives.
- To encourage more respect for the professions.

Within minutes we had 24 eager faces smiling expectantly at us, desperate to know what was in our boxes. The children were keen to share their new knowledge of Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole, nursing in the battlefields, old uniforms and much, much more.

'Do we look like nurses?' I asked. 'No,' they replied in unison. No long dresses, no hats, no aprons. Were we really who we claimed to be? We explained how and why uniforms have changed and why children's nurses now wear trousers, polo shirts and bright tabards. Were they convinced? It was the Winnie the Pooh stickers on Mim's badge that finally made them accept that yes, we really were nurses.

The next topic to tackle was their being a patient. We discussed coming into A&E with lots of people around, doctors in white coats and nurses in white uniforms – real nurses of course. Mim and I know that the children's ward at Milton Keynes is a great place to be but could we convince the children? Of course we could: computer games, televisions, painting and much more ensure that children are well catered for.

'What about mum and dad?' they asked. 'No problem,' was our reply, 'mum or dad can sleep in a comfy chair by the bed.' We added two warnings: first, parents tend to be a bit grumpy when they have to sleep by the bed all night and, second, we encourage brothers and sisters to visit. This caused quite a groan.

So far, so good. The hospital was obviously a different kind of entertainment centre. So it was time to be a little more serious. We finally opened the boxes and out came a demonstration doll. Now we were talking 'magic cream', butterflies, aeroplanes, taking blood. One child was interested in seeing the needle in the demonstration



cannula, but we had agreed with the teachers not to show any needles just in case anyone had a phobia.

'Has anyone been into hospital?' we asked. Eager hands waved in the air. There were lots of stories of cuts, bumps and breaks. A voice piped up: 'My daddy's a doctor at the hospital. Do you know him?' 'Yes,' we confirmed. 'Daddy often

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comes to the children's ward to see his patients.' One little girl was very proud.

There was more chatter about going to theatre, people in gowns and masks, counting to ten, falling asleep and waking up with mum and dad by the bed. We answered all their ques-

tions before they left for the next lesson.

One modern matron and one hospital play specialist had spent their morning seeing their work through the eyes of a child. We had great fun, and met enthusiasm and honesty. So thank you to the teachers and children for welcoming us and being such a great group. And thank you to those who allow us to nurse children, the most rewarding challenge that we face every day

Carol Groome is senior nurse for children and Mim Claridge is hospital play specialist at Milton Keynes General NHS Trust



Hands up: Mim Claridge, centre, and Carol Groome with children from Fernwood school in Bedfordshire

Sarah Mullally



How friends influence young people's career choices

The debate about the place of caring in nursing and broader concerns about whether, as a society, we are losing touch with our ability to care, raises questions for me about the values and attributes of a caring profession. What does it mean to care for others? How do we convey these values to nursing's newcomers?

We need to think about what shapes the experience of caring for children and young people. Today it is far less likely that they will help look after grandparents or older neighbours. During a recent parents' evening at my daughter's school I was struck by the lack of material promoting nursing as a career. So how could I refuse when invited to give a careers talk?

The group I met was greatly influenced by their peers' perceptions of 'high status careers'. Looking after animals, sport and entertainment were firm favourites and being a lawyer was top of the list. One of them talked about a sick person they had cared for and how this might lead them into nursing. Personal experience had clearly been a big influence. But the recognition of the value of this experience by their peers was necessary for them to consider nursing.

It is most encouraging that, in a recent survey of 11 to 18 year olds for BskyB, nursing was among the most popular career choices of British teenagers. Many other nurses will be involved in similar school visits. The visits give us a chance to articulate our values, successes and achievements. They are also an opportunity to work with teachers and parents and to hear from young people what caring means to them.

Resources to support this work, developed with the RCN and *Nursing Standard's Nursing The Future* campaign can be used all year round to complement the school curriculum and ensure nursing continues to be seen as a serious career option.

Sarah Mullally is England's chief nursing officer

Celebrate Nurses' Day: help spread the word about nursing

Worldwide celebrations take place on May 12, Nurses' Day, supported by the RCN and the International Council of Nurses (ICN). It is Florence Nightingale's birthday and falls right in the middle of RCN congress week, providing an opportunity to celebrate the way in which nurses transform people's lives.

This year Nurses' Day is being used as a platform to launch events and activities promoting nursing that could take place throughout the rest of the year, including:

- Visiting local primary and secondary schools and colleges to talk about the role of nursing and career opportunities.
- Inviting local politicians and the media to open days at work.
- Seminars or workshops focusing on career progression or developing roles.
- Events or workshops for patient groups explaining nurses' roles.
- Exhibitions in the workplace or in public places such as shopping centres.
- Fundraising in aid of the campaign to erect a statue to commemorate Mary Seacole, the Jamaican nurse voted the nation's greatest black Briton in a BBC poll. Information from Maxine Hurley

at the RCN on 020 7647 3461 or maxine.hurley@rcn.org.uk

- An RCN poster – *Get into Nursing* – will be available after congress. Ordering details will be published in *RCN Bulletin* and on the website.

The RCN has been liaising with the Department of Health in England which is also very keen to combine Nurses' Day with the launch of a campaign to promote nursing as a career choice. Its website, www.learnaboutnursing.org was planned as a resource for primary school teachers but is now being extended to include information for careers advisors to use with older age groups.

The department also wants to encourage nurses to visit schools. Its website will give guidance and key contact details for schools liaison co-ordinators in workforce development confederations.

The RCN also supports the ICN's Nurses Day 2004 campaign on working with the poor against poverty. An event is being held around the ICN campaign at RCN congress. Information and a toolkit can be downloaded from the ICN website at www.icn.ch

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