

Even Through All Adversity



Manda Dunne

BARNA Chair

It is with great pride and pleasure that I write this letter almost immediately following the BARN Annual conference and exhibition. It is indeed that 'even through all adversity' we managed to hold a successful, interactive and enjoyable conference as the present financial and economic climate does not make it easy for a delegate, that's for sure.

We were back in our usual summertime spot which meant that we were only seven months from our re-launch conference, and you did not let us down!

We had a healthy attendance and fantastic commercial support, not to mention the outstanding speakers who gave us their expertise, knowledge and time making for an informative and interesting programme.

We were very fortunate to have J.P. Nolan, Acute Nurse Advisor to the Royal College of Nursing to deliver our keynote speech, which was thought provoking and inspiring.

Susan Carter, the immediate past president of American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses (ASPAN) gave a lovely close about leadership, which I know we were all able to relate to one way or another.

Susan was preceded by Petty Officer Paul Schofield of the Royal Navy who gave us a presentation about recruitment to the Royal Navy Reserves. It was informative, interesting and tempting if only some of us had been younger!

How fitting that we should have had a presentation from the Royal Navy as we were in the grounds of the old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, now the University of Greenwich. Truly stunning surroundings

that gave a sense of walking back in time with an almost mystical ambience. Of course the rain decided to join us, but that's to be expected I think. Even Lord Horatio Nelson himself once said 'I cannot command winds and weather' so no help there!

There was a buzz of enthusiasm and a yearn for learning which makes me feel proud to be involved with our association, and it is a privilege to meet so many professionals who have probably had to fight to be at the conference one way or another. I am grateful to all of you for making the effort to be with us, to your colleagues and managers who gave you support to be there and to all our guests who show their support to us year on year.

I am aware that nurses are finding it increasingly difficult to attend conferences and study days because they are either unable to have a paid day away from the workplace or prevented from taking a day off from work even to use their own time, or told that they cannot be spared. The tradition of hospitals paying the delegate fee is becoming less available in some Trusts, and we are witnessing a change in that many nurses have to fund their own attendance because they are unable to obtain support from their Trust.

It does feel as if nurses are being prevented from accessing the education needed to be able to maintain specialist skills and to update and revisit knowledge absolutely relevant to practice. Apart from the fact that this is unfair, it is not acceptable and we as nurses seem to be trapped in an historic inequality when we look at and compare other professions such as medicine.

In the Francis Report table of recommendations no. 185 it states: 'There should be an increased focus in nurse training, education and professional development on the practical requirements of delivering compassionate care in addition to the theory'.

It goes on to say: 'Drive to maintain, develop and improve their own standards and abilities;' and 'Intellectual achievements to enable them to acquire through training the necessary technical skills'.

This surely must apply to post registration too as speciality nursing is very specific in its requirements and nurses must be able to access the knowledge to underpin their practice.

It also states in point no. 194, 'As part of a mandatory annual performance appraisal, each nurse, regardless of workplace setting, should be required to demonstrate in their annual learning portfolio an up-to-date knowledge of nursing practice and its implementation. Alongside developmental requirements, this should contain documented evidence of recognised training undertaken, including wider relevant learning'.

These points alone highlight the need for nurses to access learning relevant to their practice but in order to have documented evidence they need to be allowed to attend in the first place.

As an association BARNA would like to know, and will endeavour to find out, if anything can and will be put in place to ensure that nurses are able to attend relevant study days pertinent to their speciality, and whether they will be funded and released from their workplace.

We cannot stress more strongly how important this is to us and how this affects the well-being of the patients under our care. We feel that the perioperative environment is often overlooked and underestimated but I am sure you will agree, patients are at their most vulnerable whilst under our care.

All this said, we would have no association without you and I would like to extend my gratitude to you all for your continued support.

Remember, the fun and the reward is in learning and 'education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world', Nelson Mandela.