

First neonatal graduates ever in Northern Ireland

The School of Nursing & Midwifery at Queen's University, Belfast, celebrated the first group of neonatal graduates ever in N Ireland at the July 2011 ceremony.

Two degree programmes, BSc(Hons) Enhanced Neonatal Studies and the BSc(Hons) Neonatal Studies resulted in seven graduates, six of whom work in the Royal Jubilee Regional Neonatal Unit in Belfast. Both these programmes are part-time study so the students worked full-time while undertaking their studies.

Senior Teaching Fellow in Midwifery Sharon Nurse designed and coordinated the modular programmes as well as teaching and assessing students. She paid tribute to the support she received from neonatal managers and clinical staff across N Ireland and also the medical staff who assisted in lecturing students,

particularly Dr David Sweet, Consultant Neonatologist at Royal Jubilee Regional NNU.

Head of School Professor Linda Johnston, a neonatal nurse and researcher, opened the proceedings with a speech that highlighted the invaluable work done by nurses in neonatal units globally. All of the students had a wonderful graduation day and were joined by family and friends for the ceremony – and of course there were the obligatory strawberries and cream as well as champagne afterwards.

Queen's University congratulates all the graduates and hopes they may be an encouragement to others in achieving this unique academic award created specifically for neonatal nurses and midwives.



Happy graduates are, from left, Ann Brogan, Sandra Cairns, Wendy Owen, Sharon Nurse (Lecturer), Sally Hamilton, Grace Neill and Sharon Murray.

Antenatal education gives important support to mothers and fathers-to-be

Research by the NCT *Preparing for Birth and Parenthood* is the latest in a series of recent reports that have confirmed the importance of antenatal education in the transition to parenthood.

The NCT's report, a survey of 928 expectant parents, finds that only 3% of women said they felt 'confident' about birth before attending an NCT antenatal course, whereas afterwards 98% said they felt 'confident' or 'fairly confident'. Similarly among dads-to-be surveyed, just 1% said they felt 'confident' about birth before their course; afterwards 97% felt 'confident' or 'fairly confident'.

As well as practical skills for labour

including breathing, movement and birth positions, the courses cover pain relief options and prepare expectant parents for the early days with a new baby, emphasising the importance of support from family, friends and professionals and providing practical preparation for breastfeeding. When their baby was three months old, 80% of women and 87% of men said the information on breastfeeding provided on their course had been useful.

NCT-led courses run by children's centres or the NHS are free of charge to parents. NCT's longer courses are not funded and need to be paid for by parents. Reduced-fee places are available for parents on low income. Any surplus from the course is invested back into the charity's vital training, public policy work and services.

Updated information guide for health professionals

Bliss is launching its updated *Community Health Professionals Information Guide*. The guide, sponsored by Abbott, is designed to ensure that community health professionals have access to the information they need to provide appropriate support to families of preterm and sick babies following discharge from hospital.

The new edition features parent stories, helpful tips, a discharge checklist and new evidence-based research tailored directly to the information needs of community health professionals.

It is hoped that the guide will encourage health visitors and staff on the units to build strong supportive relationships with each other. Bliss believes that the earlier in their stay on the unit families meet their health visitor, the more they will benefit when they go home.



Copies are available from Bliss by emailing zoec@bliss.org.uk

Online nursing community for sharing ideas

Care Challenge (www.care-challenge.com) is an online initiative developed by Sanofi in collaboration with nurses' organisations for nurses and is part of the Connecting Nurses international initiative. It comes in the form of a contest, accessible from a dedicated website where nurses can submit their ideas, vote for or engage in conversation about other nurses' ideas.

The *Care Challenge* nursing community enables members to share information and education with others in the field and nominate colleagues for an award in nursing excellence. This recognition programme is open to licensed nurses anywhere in the world. There will be a total of 20 awards for the best ideas.

The programme is expected to bring a range of other benefits to nurses such as improving recognition of the nursing community by giving them a stronger voice. It will support dialogue within the nursing community by creating networking opportunities at a national and international level. Helping to share knowledge on nursing techniques will enhance education, research and practice as well as the care of patients.

Paediatric e-learning resource now free to healthcare professionals

The subscription fee to an online paediatric resource designed for healthcare professionals has been waived to extend user access. *Spotting the Sick Child* (www.spottingthesickchild.com) is now free to users working in the NHS including GPs, paediatricians, nurse practitioners, paramedics, medical students, health visitors and all those involved in emergency care.

Since removing the £5 subscription fee in June, the number of subscribers nationally has increased by over 3,000 to around 11,200 users – and this figure is still rising, a trend that the resource developers are hopeful will continue.

Spotting the Sick Child was commissioned by The Department of Health to support the medical profession in the examination and diagnosis of the seven most common acute problems that children present with. These include rash, breathing difficulties, dehydration, fever, fits, abdominal pain and head injury.

“Diagnosing children is a skilled process,” says Dr Nicholas Blackwell of OCB Media who designed the programme in collaboration with the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust and the University of Leicester.



“It can be difficult for a child to communicate their symptoms and their condition can also deteriorate quite quickly. Furthermore, few healthcare workers receive in-depth paediatric training. For example, a trainee doctor will usually complete just one three-month paediatric rotation and therefore may be unfamiliar with many conditions that children are prone to.”

Spotting the Sick Child is an interactive resource that enables users to follow a patient’s journey, making decisions on their treatment and assessing their response. It also includes advice on carrying out examinations, background information, communicating with children and red flag conditions, all supported by video guides and examples.

To subscribe to the service, visit www.spottingthesickchild.com.

Importance of toddler nutrition



The Infant & Toddler Forum is stepping up its work to encourage wider adoption of its *Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers* launched last year to address the lack of simple, consistent guidance on toddler eating habits. The Forum supports those working in the early years sector and aims to ensure all children get the best start in life.

Health agendas need to focus on supporting practitioners, parents and carers with effective tools to promote healthy eating. *Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers*, is an easy-to-use guide on what food to offer, what eating behaviours to encourage and how best to manage mealtimes. Endorsed by the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA), Child Growth Foundation, National Obesity Forum and the British Dental Health Foundation, the ‘Ten Steps’ are designed to encourage positive changes to toddler feeding with small easy actions.

The PLA commented that what most impressed them about the ‘Ten Steps’ is that they are specifically aimed at under-threes, emphasise the difference between toddlers and young children, give factual information, encourage routine and give parents confidence.

Infant & Toddler Forum: 020 8971 0022 or www.infantandtoddlerforum.org

Innovative maternity services recognised at awards ceremony

The 10th annual awards for innovative maternity services were presented at the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Maternity (APPGM) summer reception, on Monday 11 July, at the Terrace Pavilion, Houses of Parliament, by Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health Anne Milton MP.

Among the awards presented was an award for ‘Most marked improvement in services to address health inequalities or improve outcomes for mothers and babies’, sponsored by Vitabiotics. This was won by the West Midlands Neonatal Surgical Project, part of Solihull Primary Care Trust, which has reduced babies being transferred out of the region for surgery by 10-fold through the introduction of a neonatal surgical outreach nurse and a visiting neonatologist.

Another award for ‘Best example of woman-centred postnatal care’ sponsored by the Association of Radical Midwives was given to Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust for their introduction of kangaroo care for women with preterm and small babies cared for on the postnatal/transitional care ward, which has helped to increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding on discharge.



Winner – Solihull PCT.



Winner – Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.