



multiple sclerosis
specialist nurse association

UKMSSNA, PO Box 93, Spirella Building, Bridge
Road, Letchworth, Hertfordshire, SG6 4ET
Tel 01462 476702
Fax 01462 476710
ukmssna@mstrust.org.uk

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UKMSSNA: One Year On!

Welcome to the first UK MS Specialist Nurse Association newsletter. We are now a full year on from the election of the first committee of the UKMSSNA and it has been a busy year!

We have had the first UK International MS Specialist Nurse Conference; been involved in the writing of the NICE Guidelines for MS Care; produced the UK MS Clinical Management Manual; been involved in the writing of a distance learning diploma in MS Care at Leeds Metropolitan University; seen the first UK MS Nurses take the credentialing exam and seen membership of the UKMSSNA grow to a magnificent 109.

The committee have also been working hard to develop the infrastructure that will allow future committees to work more efficiently and effectively. We have been putting in place and

identifying the need for processes and protocols that will allow us to respond to any situation that may occur, for example releasing press statements. The committee is also hoping to obtain funding for and recruit someone to work for the UKMSSNA as a facilitator to assist with secretarial duties and also to assist in research and development processes within the Association. In addition the committee have been developing and strengthening partnerships with other organisations such as the International Organisation of MS Nurses, MS Trust, MS Society, Royal College of Nursing, Association of British Neurologists, the Department of Health and the National Institute for Clinical

First International MS Nurse Conference held in the UK

MS Nursing itself continues to develop apace as a specialism and links with our international colleagues grow. The first International Conference of MS Nursing to be held in the UK took place last November in Harrogate (*International Perspectives on MS*). This was jointly organised by the UKMSSNA, MS Trust and the IOMSN; delegates attended from all over America, Canada, Australia, Europe and of course the UK.

Speakers at the Conference included MS Nurses of all the different nationalities. Talks included a personal view of the impact of MS from someone with MS, a family member and an MS Nurse; other topics included Research

Competencies for MS Nurses, Credentialing, Managing MS without Drug Therapy and a fascinating discussion examining the provision of healthcare for people with MS in different countries around the world.

The Conference proved to be very lively, stimulating and enjoyable and it is hoped that it will be repeated at some stage in the not so distant future. We are sure that all those who had the opportunity to attend will agree that it was a very enjoyable meeting and would like to join us in thanking the MS Trust for helping to organise the event and hosting it so magnificently.

UK MS Clinical Management Manual

One of the biggest projects, which the UKMSSNA has been working on over the last 12 months, has been the MS Clinical Management Manual for the UK. This was launched at the MS Trust MS Specialist Nurse Conference in Loughborough earlier this year, as those of you who were able to attend will know.

The MS Clinical Management Manual is the equivalent of an evidence based care plan that covers just about all aspects of MS Nursing you might practise. The manual has evolved from the Canadian Care plan for MS Nursing that a group of UK MS Nurses (and others), led by Nicki Ward and Bernie

Porter, have worked hard to develop, improve and anglicise. This has now evolved into a much expanded and inherently useful document that we are sure will prove itself to be an invaluable resource.

The care plan will not only provide practical help for MS Nurses and their clients who are working at all stages of the disease course but will also help nurses to prepare for the credentialing exam. We have taken heed of what MS Nurses themselves say they want while developing this document, for example providing guidance to help newly appointed MS Nurses as well as setting out the evidence base for our practice and trying to

dispel some of the myths of MS care. We are hopeful that a copy of the MS Clinical Management Manual will be available to every NHS centre in the UK and available to purchase by any interested parties.

We have been able to work on and complete this project due to an educational grant from Serono and we would like to take this opportunity to thank Phyllis Scullion and the other staff at Serono for their support with this project. If you have not yet received a copy of this manual, details of how to obtain one will be published in the next

Credentialing Exam

Congratulations must go to the first group of UK MS Nurses who took the International Certificate in MS Nursing in Harrogate last November. These nurses are now entitled to put the letters MSCN after their names as MS Certified Nurses.

The examination was the inspiration of June Halper, Executive Director of the Consortium of MS Centres, who wanted an internationally recognised qualification for nurses who cared for people with MS. She gathered together an international committee, led by Heidi Maloni, to establish this examination and to ensure that it is both valid and reliable. Nicki Ward, Lecturer / Practitioner in MS, University of Central England was the representative from the UK and joined other committee members from the US, Canada, Australia, Italy and The Netherlands. It is planned to hold sittings for the exam every year at Harrogate. While it is predominantly aimed at MS Nurses it is not exclusively so and any nurse with 2 or more years experience of working with people with MS can sit the exam should they so wish. The date of the next exam sitting is 2nd November at Harrogate.

The cost of the examination is \$250, but there are

scholarships available to nurses in the UK who want to sit this examination. The cost of the examination will therefore cost £33.50. For further information on this, contact us here at the UKMSSNA.

The exam itself is not too frightening! It consists of 150 multiple-choice questions based around the 5 domains of: concepts underlying clinical practice; assessment and intervention for clinical practice; advocacy; education and research. A reference book (sponsored by Teva) that helps prepare for the exam will be available shortly, ask your local Teva representative for your copy.

While MS Nurses in the UK do not need to qualify as MSCN's in order to practice, the qualification does provide proof of a baseline level of knowledge and competence; validates the individual nurse's qualifications and knowledge of MS Nursing practice.

Certification also serves to promote standard practices based on the available evidence; encourages best outcomes for the nurse-patient relationship and helps to unite nurses around the globe. We are certainly keen to promote this qualification amongst our members and will support MS Nurses wanting

Your part in the UKMSSNA

We are here because you voted for us and we were elected as a committee to represent the interests and views of UK MS Nurses both in the UK and increasingly throughout the world. We can only do this if you let us know what issues are important to you, which projects you see as priorities and give us feedback (constructive if possible!) on the work in hand. Just about everyone in the UKMSSNA should know and have contact with at least one member of the committee - please do let us know your thoughts and concerns. We are also always really pleased to accept offers of help on various projects and would welcome anyone who feels they would like to be more involved.

MS Nurse Competencies

I'm sure most of you will have heard by now of the Agenda for Change which the Government is hoping to implement by October 2004. This involves doing away with the current grading of nurses and will introduce bands instead which are based on the role that the nurse is undertaking which will be assessed using competencies.

The UKMSSNA have been working with the RCN and the MS Trust on the development of a set of competencies for MS Nurses for some time now and it is hoped that these will be completed in the very near future. As well as helping to inform the agenda for change process it is anticipated that the competencies will also serve as a tool to aid individual nurse's personal development, highlighting areas of strength and weakness that we can then build on and consolidate.

The competencies are divided into 10 different domains including Clinical; Knowledge of MS; Relationships with People with MS and their families; Teaching, Research and Audit. We are hopeful that once again MS Nurses will lead the way in the development of competencies for specialist nurses - particularly within Neurosciences. We are also keen to develop our own competencies prior to the implementation of Agenda for Change when it is possible that competencies will either be required at short notice or will be forced upon us! The launch of the

Who's who in the UKMSSNA?

Bernie Porter (London) *Chair*

Megan Burgess (Greater Manchester) *Vice-Chair*

Nikki Embrey (Staffs)

Gail Hayes (North & East Devon)

Rhona MacLean (Leeds)

Heidi Thompson (Northern Ireland)

Gail Clayton (South Wales)

Nicki Ward (Birmingham) *Co-opted member*

Anne McCaffrey (Scotland) *Co-opted member*

RCN Neuroscience Forum

The UKMSSNA is pleased to be involved in the formation of the Neuroscience Forum at the Royal College of Nursing that has very recently been established. As well as giving us a wider network, the forum also has 2 votes which can be used at the RCN Congress, giving us real weight behind our voice. This is a work in progress and we will let members know of further developments later in the year.

British Journal of Nursing Awards

The award ceremony to recognise excellence in MS nursing practice took place in May. This is a prestigious award and a great night out so you should think about submitting from your area next year. In the meantime the winners of the best examples of clinical practice entered at the MS Specialist Nurse Conference in Loughborough were chosen on 12th March. Congratulations go to Elizabeth Keenan and Emily Harrison who both won awards for their articles on the establishment of a disease modifying therapy service and guidelines on the use of Mitoxantrone. Both won a place at the British Journal of Nursing Awards dinner at the Savoy Hotel in London.

Congratulations go to both Nikki Embrey, who was awarded the MS Nurse of the Year prize for her work on palliative care with the multidisciplinary team in Staffordshire and Nicki Ward who was awarded the runner up prize for her work on a Fatigue Management Pack.