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Royal College of Nursing
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20 June 2006

Jane Westlake
Clerk Health & Social Services Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff bay
Cardiff
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Dear Mrs Westlake,

The Royal College of Nursing is pleased to contribute a response to the National Assembly for Wales Health and Social Services Committee consultation in preparation for the Review of Cancer Services for the People of Wales.

We were delighted to be able to nominate a specialist nurse for membership of your expert panel and we would like to express our appreciation of this excellent opportunity to contribute the knowledge and experience of our members.

If you have any queries with regards to our response please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely

TINA DONNELLY
DIRECTOR, RCN WALES

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The RCN represents nurses and
nursing, promotes excellence in
practice and shapes health policies



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Review of Cancer Services for the People of Wales Consultation

*Consultation Response from the Royal College of Nursing, Wales
Presented to the National Assembly for Wales
Health and Social Services Committee 24th July 2006*

ABOUT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING (RCN)

The RCN is the world's largest professional union of nurses, representing over 390,000 nurses, midwives, health visitors, health care support workers and nursing students, including over 22,000 members in Wales. The majority of RCN members work in the NHS with around a quarter working in the independent sector. The RCN works locally, nationally and internationally to promote standards of care and the interests of patients and nurses, and of nursing as a profession. The RCN is a UK-wide organisation, with its own National Boards for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The RCN is a major contributor to nursing practice, standards of care, and public policy as it affects health and nursing.

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies.

Review of Cancer Services for the People of Wales

Consultation Response from the Royal College of Nursing, Wales

General Principles

The Royal College of Nursing welcomes this Review and is pleased by the Health and Social Services Committee's decision to undertake such a project. The general response we have provided below is indicative of the broad and wide-ranging nature of Cancer Services, which require strong links between many different facets of the NHS in Wales.

The RCN has been delighted to provide a specialist nurse for the expert panel that will consider the evidence put towards the committee. We are happy to arrange for other nurse specialists in Cancer Services to give evidence directly to the Committee as the Review continues.

How can information technology be used more effectively to track and facilitate the patient's journey?

The Royal College of Nursing suggests that the Cancer Network Information System Cymru (CaNISC) should become the mandatory central cancer patient database in Wales. A single, effective and accurate database of cancer patients is crucial to the improvement of Cancer Services in Wales. CaNISC should be made available to the appropriate clinician at every stage of patient care. Informing Healthcare should also fully incorporate this system to make sure that it is compatible with other NHS data systems. Coordination of information systems is important since the provision of effective Cancer Services cuts across many NHS services. Confidentiality of course, must be assured.

How effectively is research and good practice being integrated with service delivery? What can be done and by whom to improve this?

The Royal College of Nursing supports the work of the Wales Cancer Trials Network and believes that it needs to be built on. This needs to be fully linked with other cancer clinical networks and the Cancer Services Co-ordinating Group in order for research to be fully integrated with service delivery.

We also believe that scientific research in Wales deserves a higher political profile and the benefits of such research to the NHS could be invaluable.

What are your views on the complexity of commissioning services? Is the process hampered by the involvement of the local health boards, cancer networks and Health Commission Wales? How could it be simplified?

The Royal College of Nursing believes Cancer Services should continue to be commissioned on a regional basis. It may be necessary to develop the role of the Regional Cancer Networks and clarify their relationship with the WAG regional offices. Both the Network and the WAG regional office should take a far stronger role in overseeing regional commissioning. The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that Cancer Services for Wales are commissioned in such a way as to take account of local need and secure parity of service across Wales.

Specialised cancer services however should be commissioned on a national basis by Health Commission Wales in consultation with the Cancer Services Co-ordinating Group.

What evidence is there of the value of screening and immunisation?

The Royal College of Nursing strongly endorses the strengthening of National Screening Programmes in Wales incorporating the 1968 World Health Organization guidelines on screening (Figure 1).

Fig. 1: World Health Organisation – Principles of Screening

Source: WHO

1. The Condition should be an important health problem.
2. There should be a treatment for the condition.
3. Facilities for diagnosis and treatment should be available.
4. There should be a latent stage of the disease.
5. There should be a test or examination of the condition.
6. The test should be acceptable to the population.
7. The natural history of the disease should be adequately understood.
8. There should be an agreed policy on who to treat.
9. The total cost of finding a case should be economically balanced in relation to medical expenditure as a whole.
10. Case-finding should be a continuous process, not just a "once and for all" project.

Screening, if appropriate, is an effective method that decreases the chances of cancer developing due to diagnosis at an early stage. The all-Wales programme of breast cancer screening has been a tremendous success and the RCN also very supportive of the introduction of a National Screening Programme for bowel cancer. This project has already begun in England and Scotland.

Informing Healthcare must also prioritise the fulfilment of the necessary information services associated with screening.

In addition to screening, the RCN also sees immunisation as a vital weapon in the battle to improve cancer services. Recent developments in cervical cancer

immunisation suggest that an extensive vaccination programme will be possible in the near future. While immunisation is crucial, the RCN also recognises that caution is required before it is implemented. A number of questions, for example who and when to vaccinate, need to be answered before going ahead with such a programme. However, these are questions that the Welsh Assembly Government could begin examining now.

Education is crucial in the prevention or reduction of cancer in the population. A far greater emphasis on this is needed in the school curriculum and clear joint planning is required between health and education policy at a national level. School Health nurses for example are in an ideal position to educate children about the risks of diet, smoking and environmental factors.

By focusing on methods such as screening, immunisation and education this Review can encourage steps towards the development of a preventative health service for Wales.

What are the barriers to the NHS in Wales keeping abreast of, and responding to, developing technologies and therapies? How might these barriers be overcome?

Adequate, consistent and sustainable funding alongside investment in the education, training and research interests of health professionals is the foundation of successful technological and therapeutic development. However Wales currently requires capital investment in technological hardware.

The Welsh Assembly Government should promote the development of its health professionals and actively plan to respond to the development of modern technology if Wales is to achieve world class standards in Cancer Services.

How can the NHS and the voluntary sector work together more effectively to deliver services?

A vital area of Cancer Services provision is the work of nurses in the voluntary sector. The Royal College of Nursing believes the work provided by nurses in this sector is often undervalued or even ignored. Organisations such as Macmillan Cancer Support or Tenovus provide crucial support services to patients and carers throughout cancer treatment. It may well prove helpful for the NHS to support voluntary organisations who are involved in the provision of cancer services in networking across Wales to promote the sustainable provision of integrated services.

The Royal College of Nursing welcomes the opportunity this review provides to examine ways that the NHS can work more effectively with the voluntary sector.

Are services centred on the patient, with service users consulted? If not what are the reasons for this and how patient involvement be improved?

The Royal College of Nursing believes nursing care must be patient centred care. We welcome the opportunity this review provides to examine ways of improving patients involvement.

**DIRECTOR, RCN WALES
TY MAETH
July 2006**