

21 April 2017

Response from the Royal College of Nursing Wales to the Health, Social Care & Sport Committee Committee's Inquiry into the use of anti-psychotic medication in care homes

The Royal College of Nursing is grateful for the opportunity to respond to this inquiry. Whilst the terms of reference ask for consideration of a number of specific areas, our response will focus on a few overarching points.

General comments

- I. Medicines management in an environment where people receiving medicines are vulnerable and suffering a range of comorbidities, often with compromised capacity, is complex and multifaceted. The importance of contemporaneous, skilled assessment and care planning cannot be overstated.
- II. Care homes must have a written policy and procedure on the administration of medicines, and all staff working in the home should be aware of the policy and should be working to it at all times. Registered nurses must also work to the NMC's Standards for Medicines Management. The vast majority of registered nurses and care home staff adhere to these standards and policies and the care delivered is to a very high standard.
- III. The Royal College of Nursing Wales' prestigious Nurse of the Year Awards have frequently acknowledged the excellent work of nurses and healthcare support workers in care home settings and with people with dementia.

Staffing levels and time to care

- IV. Providing and managing health services means caring for people. Preventing, assessing, treating or managing an illness means caring. Pain relief and ensuring a patient is nourished and hydrated means caring. Nursing is caring. Caring for someone requires time, time to learn, time to listen and talk, time to assess, time to provide care, delegate or escalate, time to reflect and improve practice. It takes time to care.
- V. In 2015 the Royal College of Nursing Wales ran a member survey to find out what issues mattered most to our members. The two issues that came out top for improving patient care were:
 - maintaining safe nurse staffing levels
 - ensuring that the staff who deliver patient care have the time and training needed to deliver this care with the dignity and respect that patients deserve
- VI. This clearly demonstrates the importance of having the right number of staff with the right level of supervision to ensure the best possible care for patients and care home residents. It is important that the team has senior, experienced

and qualified members who can provide supervision and oversight. The team needs to have the time to safely and sensitively care for the patients assigned to it, and members of that team need continuous professional development. It is when these standards are not met that errors in judgement can occur, and standards of care can decline.

- VII. Patients with dementia have specific and complex needs, and those with dementia in a care home are likely to require greater levels of care than other patients in similar settings. This should be reflected in the calculation of nurse staffing levels. The Committee may wish to consider whether there is any evidence of a relationship between dubious prescribing practices in care homes, and the ratio of registrants to patients in such settings.
- VIII. Care homes should also ensure that they are able to offer a range of treatment options for people with dementia, including evidence based psychological therapies where appropriate.

About the Royal College of Nursing

The RCN is the world's largest professional union of nurses, representing over 430,000 nurses, midwives, health visitors and nursing students, including over 25,000 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.