

NMC may regulate specialist nursing titles

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is considering the regulation of nursing titles in order to make the situation clearer for patients, nurses and employers.

At the moment the only title which is protected by law is that of Registered Nurse. There is nothing to stop a nurse calling him or herself a specialist nurse, nurse practitioner or clinical nurse specialist. This can lead to confusion when patients are led to expect a more expert level of care.

The NMC is considering recommendations from a report it commissioned earlier this year, from the Welsh Institute of Health and Social Care. Among the options outlined in the report are the accreditation of titles linked to Agenda for Change, the regulation of 'advanced' titles and the registration of nurses able to work at a specialist level.

In addition the NMC is working with the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) on this issue and looking at standards in the United States.

Nurses have expressed concern with the current situation because jobs are often made to look more attractive by giving them a specialist title. One nurse may have completed lengthy training whereas another using the same specialist title may have not. Employers also need guidance because they may not be clear about what skills and training levels they should expect from advanced nursing roles.

Jonathan Asbridge, NMC President, said: "It is important to remember that all registered nurses have to abide by the NMC's code of professional conduct. However, we are worried that patients could, quite rightly, expect a more expert level of care from a nurse described as a specialist. They need to be assured that a nurses' training reflects their title."

For a copy of the report compiled for the NMC, entitled Innovation and Protection, A Framework for Post-Registration Nursing please visit www.nmc-uk.org/publications

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Notes for Editors:

The NMC is the UK regulator for nurses, midwives and health visitors. There are around 650,000 health professionals on the register.
www.nmc-uk.org