

# Foundations of Practice and Beyond

## Wednesday

### Stream D

Session 6 0930

Session 8 1100



### Abbie Barns

## Reducing the incidence of back pain: student nurses' recommendations

### Biography

I trained as a Registered General Nurse at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham; I have worked in a variety of health care settings in the United Kingdom, America and Australia. I specialised in acute medical nursing, during this time I developed a passion for the safer handling of people. I have worked in higher education since 1999 and I work for Keele University School of Nursing and Midwifery as their Placement Quality Lead Lecturer. One of my roles is a Moving and Handling Co-ordinator for pre registration students across specialities, branches and year groups. I also work for the Nursing Midwifery Council on their Fitness to Practise Investigating Committee. I have a BA (Hons) Health and Community Studies, Masters Degree in Education and I am an NMC Registered Teacher. I am currently a PhD student at Keele University.

### Abstract

National Back Care week (3–9 October 2009) embraced the promotion of back care. However, over a decade has passed since the RCN Safer Patient Handling campaign (1996), and reports continue to highlight the high incidence of back pain within the nursing profession. This research reveals student nurses' experiences of back pain and their recommendations to reduce the incidence of back pain in the workplace. Statistics by the Department of Health (2002) report 24% of NHS staff experience back pain, reflecting the high prevalence of this study, where 34% of student nurses experience back pain during their clinical placement. Back pain has been a major cause of health problems for nurses and midwives. This concerns individuals and the profession as a whole, especially with regard to costs incurred by the NHS due to sick leave, replacement staff, wastage from the profession and the increasing number of personal injury claims (Snell, 1998).

The history surrounding back pain indicates that it is now socially acceptable to experience back pain, and in contemporary society deemed the individual continue their normal daily routine, with limited justification to rest and take sick leave from work. The pressures surrounding job security, increasing workloads and financial strains in all sectors of the healthcare professions has a spiralling influence on the individual who experiences back pain. This research provides an insight into the student nurses' experience, showing individuals coping with back pain and self-treating their symptoms. The student nurses' recommendations are profound and reflect on current published evidence. Consideration into the worth, value

and dignity of nurses and healthcare professionals deserves respect, and individual empowerment is paramount to enable student nurses and nurses not to put themselves at risk when a safe alternative is evident. Nurses of all levels need to make decisions to safeguard, promote and protect their own health and safety, thus not compromising their autonomy as a practitioner.

#### References

Department of Health (2002) *Back in Work: Everything you need to know about the national Back in Work campaign*. DH, London

Royal College of Nursing (1996a) *Code of Practice for Patient Handling*. RCN, London

Royal College of Nursing (1996b) *Introducing a Safer Patient Handling Policy*. RCN, London

Snell J (1998) Lifting the burden. *Health Serv J* **108**(5589 suppl): 8–9