Safe staffing and skill mix

The time has flown by since congress and, as we evaluate its effect and the impact on plans for Birmingham 2012, I reflect on the delegates enthusiasm for the sessions related to safe staffing and skill mix in the perioperative arena and the effect that this may be having on professional practice.

AfPP do not underestimate the challenges that perioperative practitioners are facing and the support that members and others need to enable them to manage the workplace situations that confront them over staffing levels and skill mix on a daily basis. This is addressed through member benefits that we offer including the Professional Advisory Service (PAS). This ongoing CPD need will be addressed within our educational strategy for the next year leading up to congress 2012 through member feedback and any themes identified around these issues through the PAS service.

The Mid Staffs (The Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Inquiry 2010) enquiry has been debating the concept of safe staffing levels and how this equates to quality and safety. The debate took many twists and turns and the opportunity to make available the AfPP staffing publication (AfPP 2008) at the seminar was made by a past President of the Association, Jane Reid, who was an invited participant among others. We shall of course report any feedback we get from this. There was particular debate on the quality of staff ratio, not just the numbers, and this was consequently an item of debate at our congress as well.

In congress week the Perioperative Care Collaborative (PCC) met to discuss its future, with overwhelming support to revitalise and re-establish itself. AfPP will chair the group for the next year and it has set itself a work plan to review the current position statements. The Roles and Responsibilities of the Advanced Scrub Practitioner will be the first. The session at congress on this particular subject raised the concerns and facts of the reality of the role, and its use within the workplace. The feedback from the session will be very useful for the review of this key role and how it can be practiced safely within the perioperative team. Ultimately this review, undertaken by a group of experts, will result in the setting of an updated ‘standard’ to give a benchmark for practitioners in the workplace to use in the realities of today’s healthcare environments.

Christmas is a busy time in perioperative practice and I commend everyone for their commitment to patient care and service continuance as winter pressures and adverse weather take their usual toll on staff resources.

I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a joyous New Year and look forward to working with you all again in 2012.

References
Association for Perioperative Practice 2008 Staffing for Patients in the Perioperative Setting Harrogate, AfPP

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