

Diabetes specialist nursing: Your profession needs YOU!



June James

Last year 832 out of 1361 specialist nurses completed the UK DSN workforce survey, the results of which were published in the July edition of the *Journal of Diabetes Nursing* (Gosden et al, 2010) and are also available on the NHS Diabetes website (<http://bit.ly/9VvyTJ>).

The aim of the study was to establish a register of specialist nurses working in the UK to help predict manpower and service needs over time, and to assist with workforce planning, by addressing the following questions:

- How many DSNs, paediatric DSNs and nurse consultants were working in the UK at that time?
- What was the work setting of the nurses?
- What elements of care were they involved in?
- What qualifications had the nurses gained?
- How many nurses were working at the top of their grade?
- How many nurses expected to retire in the next 10 years?
- What were the numbers of specialist nurse vacancies, “frozen posts” and staff shortages?

The information you supplied has raised the profile of the diabetes specialist nursing profession at a national level, and has raised legitimate concerns around the recruitment and retention of DSNs, particularly in this climate of “efficiency savings”.

It is essential, however, that this register is updated annually, as it provides valuable evidence to support diabetes specialist nursing. Your comments regarding survey design have been taken into account and this has led to a shorter, easier-to-complete questionnaire, which you will be available to access and complete online on the Diabetes UK and NHS Diabetes websites from 4 October. If you have a new team member please forward the survey to them so we can capture the entire workforce – we would love to increase the response rate from the 61% achieved last year.

The survey will be sent out via email at the end of September. You will need to have your Nursing and Midwifery Council number available when you complete it as this will be your unique identification number on the register; you will

not need to give your date of birth. Please be assured that this specific information will not be shared with other organisations. However, aggregated outcome data will be shared with the NHS Diabetes National Diabetes Information Service and used to support and influence commissioning. The survey results will be presented at the 2011 Diabetes UK Annual Professional Conference and a joint report produced by NHS Diabetes and Diabetes UK will be available and published in the *Journal*.

Similar surveys building on the success of last year’s are currently being developed for other professions, including podiatry and dietetics, which will be sent out in October and November. These data sets, along with the already established register of diabetologists, will provide NHS Diabetes and Diabetes UK with essential information on the diabetes workforce and will help predict workforce trends and potential gaps to support diabetes healthcare professional and inform commissioning.

We really need your help! Please spread the word among your team and complete your form as soon as you can to ensure that you are included on the database. ■

The study has been funded by NHS Diabetes and supported by Diabetes UK. The project team consists of: June James, Diabetes Nurse Consultant, Leicester; Nick Morrish, Consultant Diabetologist, Bedford; Adam Sweeney, Information Analyst and Joint Project Lead, Diabetes UK, London; Heather Stephens, Project Manager, NHS Diabetes, Leicester; Louise Stuart, Consultant Podiatrist, Manchester; Lindsay Oliver, Consultant Dietitian, North Tyneside; Gill Johnson, Regional Programme Manager; Liz Allen, Information and Strategy Programme Manager, NHS Diabetes, Leicester.

Gosden C, James J, Anderson U, Morrish N (2010) UK workforce survey of DSNs and nurse consultants. *Journal of Diabetes Nursing* 14: 250–7

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Further information

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