



Safe staffing levels needed to avoid failings in patient care

May 2015

Care of patients deteriorates when staff levels are stretched leading doctors have warned.

Doctors at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow say that inadequate nurse to patient ratios were a major contributing factor to the failure of care outlined in reports highlighted in an editorial published in the Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh today.

President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, Dr Frank Dunn said: “The nursing budget is the largest single component in the NHS staffing budget and it remains a critical resource in preventing recurrence of the poor standards of care in Mid-Staffordshire and other hospitals in the UK. Optimising staff numbers has the additional advantage of reducing levels of stress, improving morale and facilitating a caring and compassionate environment.”

The College has fully endorsed the editorial, which reviews the reports of 10 major Inquiries and Reviews into serious failings in care in the UK since 2000, including Mid Staffordshire, Bristol, Lanarkshire and the Vale of Leven.

In particular, the College says the issue of appropriate staffing levels is critical within both the medical and associated health professions and it has previously raised this issue both through the College and through the Scottish Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties.

A toolkit has been developed in Scotland in regard to appropriate nurse to patient ratios and skill mix. This has been a positive development, now mandated by the Scottish Government. However, the implementation of such toolkits has not yet been optimised throughout the country.

Our College has also explored how seven day working could address some of these issues. Our statement on adopting seven day working in practice can be accessed here:

<https://www.rcpsg.ac.uk/news/latest/adopting-seven-day-working-in-practice.aspx?cookieCheck=true>