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The bulletin's aim is to address matters related to the organisation and delivery of AHP services, and includes items of direct interest to AHP staff.

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Other Department of Health bulletins covering a wide range of topics of interest to NHS staff are also available. They include the **Chief Executive Bulletin**, **Chief Medical Director's Bulletin** and the **Chief Nursing Officer's Bulletin**. They can be found at www.doh.gov.uk/publications/bulletins.htm

TOP NEWS

Therapists on the increase

The number of therapists in the NHS is growing and on track to meet NHS Plan targets.

This is helping the NHS to cut waiting times and increase patient choice, according to the latest annual report from the Department of Health.

Since September 1999 there has been an increase of about 5,500 therapists which puts the Government well on track to achieve *The NHS Plan* target of 6,500 more therapists and other health professionals by 2004.

The report highlights one case where AHPs are helping to modernise health services.

At Winchester and Eastleigh Healthcare NHS Trust, a 20-week wait for a routine orthopaedic consultant appointment has been cut to three weeks and emergencies are seen within two days.

Staff set up a back triage clinic so patients with back pain could be seen quicker than if they had to wait

for a full orthopaedic outpatients appointment.

The team – two physiotherapists and an orthopaedic physician – can also fast-track patients to rheumatology, a pain clinic, physiotherapy, a surgical spine clinic and a chronic pain management group.

During its first year the service assessed about 500 patients and provided follow-up treatment including spinal injections, mobilisations and manipulations, rehabilitation programmes and spinal stabilisation exercises.

The annual report also shows an increase in cross-sector therapy working. The highest increase was for chiropody services with two per cent more new cases.

The full annual report is at www.doh.gov.uk/dohreport/index.htm

Blurring the boundaries in A&E

An accident and emergency-based physiotherapy practitioner service is cutting waiting times and giving patients immediate access to rehabilitation.

A 'see and treat' service was formed at the Countess of Chester Hospital in February. It includes seven emergency nurse practitioners (5.5WTE) and one physiotherapy practitioner. Usually physiotherapy roles are an add-on to the emergency nurse practitioner (ENP) service but, at Chester, the

physiotherapist works on the same shift pattern as the nursing staff.

Soon both ENPs and the physiotherapy practitioner will be working to the same protocols for management of patients with minor injuries.

A&E physiotherapy practitioner Keith Graham said: "The team is

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Chief health professions officer Kay East talks about award-winning AHPs and the need for innovative practice.

Allied health professionals make a real difference to patients and the services they receive. This difference, whether it is on an organisational scale or with an individual patient, should be recognised.

As highlighted in last month's bulletin, the good work of AHPs was recognised at the 2003 Health and Social Care Awards. We had both an individual winner and a team winner. Two of the finalists for the primary care award were also AHP services.

One was the Physio Direct Team at Huntingdonshire PCT. This pilot service allows patients from two GP surgeries to talk to a physiotherapist by telephone without having to see a doctor first. The transformation of the service from GP-controlled access to patients making contact with physiotherapists

direct has dramatically improved access and 'fail to attend' rates.

Another was the Swindon Primary Care Psychology/Counselling Service which has a range of support groups run by mental health workers, users, counsellors, dieticians and physiotherapists. This service empowers mental health patients by teaching them skills rather than fostering dependency. There is now a no-wait counselling service in over 70 per cent of the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust area.

These practices are fundamental to improving the patient experience. It also emphasises that innovative and responsive solutions can be developed locally to meet local needs. The development of primary care trusts and devolution of responsibility

for the provision of services really does offer more flexibility for frontline workers and this, in turn, increases the choice and diversity of services that are available to patients.

I recommend AHPs read Huntingdonshire PCT's strategy document, which highlights how the PCT wants to see the roles of AHPs develop and be supported, and highlights the good work being done by professionals in this organisation.

I hope to bring you more examples of best practice in future bulletins so we can spread this work and learn from each other.

The strategy is at www.hunts-pct.nhs.uk Simply click the 'Public Meetings' button on the left, scroll down to June 2003 and select item 6 (Allied health professionals strategy).

TOP NEWS ...continued

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working towards blurring the boundaries between professional roles. This is working well. I have been involved in informally training the nurses in how to assess knee and shoulder injuries, of which I have a lot of experience, and the nurses have been training me on wound care. We are all working together, passing on our expertise to each other to improve the services we give.

"The aim is that both groups of professionals will be able to see the same types of patients and deliver a more complete package of care."

During the initial pilot, more than half the patients assessed were discharged home, 12 per cent were brought back to A&E for review and a quarter were referred on to other health services.

In total, 46 per cent of patients were seen by the physiotherapist extended scope practitioner within an hour. Nine out of 10 patients were seen within two hours.

Following the pilot, a national Network of Accident and Emergency Physiotherapists was created to help share information between those physiotherapists in A&E who have a practitioner service with those who want to develop their own.

More at www.aephysio.co.uk
Contact: keith.graham@coch.nhs.uk or
A&E matron jane.evans@coch.nhs.uk

Changing places report

Allied health professionals are making a key contribution to cutting delayed discharges in the NHS.

The Health and Social Care Change Agent Team (CAT) has published its first annual report. *Changing Places* sets out the work carried out by the team in 2002-2003 and summarises key messages and learning points that have emerged so far.

CAT was established to help tackle the problem of delayed hospital discharges. There is a very strong AHP base in the team with three of its 12 members being allied health professionals.

By March this year, the team was providing intensive support to 25 health and social care communities. These sites have achieved an average 24 per cent reduction in the numbers of people delayed in hospital.

One example is Harrogate Hospital, where an occupational therapist and A&E care manager have cut unnecessary admissions. They screen the A&E notes of all attendees aged 75 and over and then they contact the most vulnerable with a follow-up telephone call.

Also highlighted is South Devon Healthcare's dedicated transport for occupational therapy home visits,

where there are also plans to train the driver to install small pieces of equipment.

In addition, therapists' roles in intermediate care teams – which provide support to patients after discharge – are also featured.

Change agent Anne Ashby said: "The team has found some good examples of services where therapists have been instrumental in improving care pathways for older people and their carers by working in a much more integrated way with all health and social care agencies.

"However, in some systems, therapists are not as involved as they might be in embracing the modernisation agenda. I recommend that all therapists read the revised discharge workbook, *Discharge from hospital: Pathway, process and practice* and *Changing Places* and regularly check the change agent team and reimbursement websites."

The annual report and the discharge workbook are at www.doh.gov.uk/changeagentteam/new.htm

More on reimbursement at www.doh.gov.uk/reimbursement

Obesity: the health timebomb

Obesity has been branded a health “timebomb” with the potential to explode over the next three decades.

The Government’s chief medical officer Sir Liam Donaldson has warned that many developed countries are heading for an epidemic of overweight and obese citizens in his annual report.

Obesity increases the risk of coronary heart disease and cancer and is also a major cause of premature death through diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure and osteoarthritis.

It is currently causing an estimated 9,000 premature deaths a year in England and reduces life expectancy by nine years.

AHPs, working with other health staff, are already tackling the problem by providing obesity prevention and management services.

But further action is needed to help and support people –

particularly children – to reshape their diet and increase the amount of regular physical activity that they take.

Dietetic services manager at Nottingham City Primary Care Trust Helen Storer said: “Preventing and managing obesity requires co-

“For those that are already obese, even a modest weight loss can have substantial benefits”.

ordination and partnership working. AHPs can contribute to this at a local level by working together to encourage patient-centred approaches for promoting healthier lifestyles”.

In his report, Sir Liam said: “For those that are already obese, even a modest weight loss can have substantial benefits. A 10-kilogram

loss is associated with a 20 per cent fall in total mortality and a 10 per cent reduction in total cholesterol.”

Now the Department of Health is leading on the development of a new Food and Health Action Plan, looking at food supply, production and preparation. It will

also suggest ways to widen access to healthier eating choices.

The reform of the Welfare Food Scheme, better promotion of breastfeeding and initiatives such as the 5 A DAY programme for children will help to improve the overall balance of the diet.

More at www.doh.gov.uk/cmo/annualreport2002/index.htm

Classroom therapists

Children are getting a better speech and language therapy service due to an innovative partnership between therapists and schools.

North Lincolnshire speech and language therapy service realised that school-aged children were not getting the service they needed.

Children were missing school to attend clinics, 12 per cent did not turn up for appointments, there were not enough therapists to cover each school in the area and communication between health staff and schools was poor.

During a successful year-long pilot, therapists went into schools and saw all children with special needs. This was so successful that the North Lincolnshire Local Education Authority has funded a specialist speech and language therapy post to co-ordinate the service.

During the pilot the amount of

therapy the children received increased, lost school time dropped and better links were forged between health and education providers.

Teacher, classroom assistant, parent and child satisfaction also increased, as did the job satisfaction of therapists. Speech and language therapy also became integrated into the school curriculum.

The new service has also cut waiting times to see therapists in community clinics.

The service has since developed a BTEC-accredited course in speech and language therapy for classroom teaching assistants. It is now halfway through its first year and is fully subscribed with 20

assistants. The aim of the course is to create a network of skilled support staff across the schools in the area.

Department of Health AHP advisor Karen Dinsdale said: “This case study is one of the many examples I am now collecting where speech and language therapists are working collaboratively with partners in education to improve services for children with special educational needs.

“Moreover, it illustrates how capacity can be increased to meet the increasing demand through the development of new ways of working.”

Contact: bryony.simpson@nlpct.nhs.uk

HAVE YOUR SAY

The Allied Health Professions Branch in the Department of Health welcomes feedback on any aspect of the information that we have included in the Bulletin. E-mail ahp-branch@doh.gsi.gov.uk or write to AHP Branch, Wellington House, 135-155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG.

Retaining health professionals in the NHS

The second column in a series on recruitment and retention by Helen Wiseman.

The retention of competent, confident, motivated staff is a top priority. The NHS cannot and should not rely on a continual flow of new recruits.

High turnover, vacancies for long periods and the frequent use of temporary staff often leaves the remaining permanent employees feeling pressured by capacity issues.

This also makes it difficult for staff to participate in the very activities which enable them to be better practitioners and motivate them to stay.

There are many reasons staff remain working in the NHS. What is important to many AHPs is clarity of role, clinical autonomy, the mutual respect and support of their

peers and colleagues and a robust professional network, providing supervision and mentorship.

Leadership styles which facilitate change at all levels, provide good access to continuing professional development and generate wider career opportunities for staff to extend their roles is also an important factor.

Flexible working patterns and retirement options, access to childcare and policies and practices that value diversity also have a positive influence staff.

Helen Wiseman, the Department of Health's AHP recruitment and retention lead said: "If managers do not implement or facilitate the above then their retention rates will fall and staff will experience burnout,

become demotivated and, most importantly, become poor therapists.

"We need to work smarter, not harder, and real life examples of how this can be achieved, by people in similar situations to yourself, are frequently cited in this bulletin, at conferences, in professional journals, through special interest groups, and the list continues.

"Please take the time to tap into the range of resources available as it could improve your patient care and save you time and money."

For further information contact Helen Wiseman at Helen.wiseman@doh.gsi.gov.uk or on 0113 254 6454 or 07970 904917

■ In next month's issue Helen will examine the area of returners.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Patient choice – the impact on AHPs

AHP heads of service need to understand the new choice system that is being expanded across the NHS.

The Government is committed to giving patients more choice about treatment and where they are treated. From 2005, the Government plans that patients who require elective surgery will be able to choose from at least three hospitals – or other appropriate providers – once their GP has decided with them that a referral is required.

Choice 2005 has implications for standards, protocols, patient information before and after treatment and arrangements for post-discharge care.

The system will be based in primary care. For example, if a patient and GP are discussing options for treatment for severe back pain the patient might be offered a choice of treatment:

- *in the practice or at another practice in the PCT by either a GP or a therapist with a special interest (and accredited extra skills) in back pain*
- *or referral to an orthopaedic department in up to three different hospitals with which their PCT has agreed a contract.*

In addition, a new system of allocating resources to NHS hospitals is being introduced, providing incentives to make improvements. Cash will follow the choices patients make so that the hospitals that do more, get more.

In London, a number of free workshops for senior AHPs on choice are planned for September, October and November.

For more information e-mail events@4ps.com with your details.

More information on choice policy at www.doh.gov.uk/extending-choice/index.htm

Chaplaincy workforce strategy

A strategy is being developed to modernise the practice of chaplaincy and spiritual health care workers in England.

South Yorkshire Workforce Development Confederation is creating the plan for more than 300 full-time staff, about 3,000 part-time staff and more than 10,000 volunteers in the sector.

This is the first time a strategy has been planned for this group of NHS staff and it aims to support the chaplaincy workforce as it seeks to improve the spiritual and physical

care of patients.

The strategy proposes to widen and lengthen the career pathway of chaplains through introducing specialist, advanced and, in the longer term, consultant-level posts.

An early focus of the strategy will be to set out a more formal training arrangement for the spiritual health care workforce. Currently, training arrangements are informal and ad-hoc and the needs of part-time staff, particularly those from world faiths are not given enough attention.

In these ways, the strategy seeks to clarify the status of the spiritual healthcare workforce through professional development and self-regulation.

The proposed programme of work to deliver the strategy will be supported by four development units hosted by WDCs.

They will work with local health care providers, faith communities and neighbouring universities and colleges. The plan is to have full implementation by 2010.

The strategy has been completed and is due to be published in the autumn. For more information contact: Alexandra Street, national liaison manager, at lexie.street@wdconfed.nhs.uk

Radiography recruitment and retention

The strength of the radiography workforce would benefit from improved working conditions and better feedback between staff and managers, a study has found.

Researchers from Loughborough University's business school conducted interviews to address the profession's staffing level problems.

Looking Good? The Attractiveness of the NHS as an Employer – funded by the Department of Health – aimed to identify and understand the major factors that encourage or dissuade potential recruits in choosing a career in radiography.

Those interviewed were school pupils, radiography students, mature students, radiography assistants, agency radiographers and radiographers working in the private sector.

Questions focused on the image of radiography, the best and worst aspects of the job, barriers to working in the NHS and how to make the NHS a more attractive employer.

Their recommendations included raising awareness of the profession, increased working flexibilities, better pay and better feedback between management and staff to promote a feeling of value.

The findings are at www.science.direct.com/science/journal/10788174 Full details at www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/bs/lookinggood

Practice Plus consultation

AHPs are among NHS staff being urged to give feedback on the effectiveness of Practice Plus, the third and final stage of the Improving Working Lives (IWL) initiative.

IWL sets a standard of good working practice by which NHS employers and staff can measure an organisation's human resources management.

Organisations were required to achieve stage two accreditation by April 2003 by demonstrating they were improving the working lives of staff. They are now expected to complete the third and final stage of IWL accreditation by next April.

Practice Plus provides training to selected assessors but only targets those who have participated in at

least one assessment during the past 18 months.

IWL accreditation will be awarded to NHS organisations that have successfully completed Practice Plus.

NHS organisations can also use the National Audit Instrument (NAI), a practical tool enabling them to detail evidence of how they are implementing IWL.

Further details about the consultation process and NAI at www.doh.gov.uk/iwl

Performance ratings

The overall performance of NHS hospitals has improved over the past year despite having to meet tougher targets.

These are recorded in the annual performance ratings which award stars to NHS organisations based on their success at meeting national Government standards.

The best performers receive the top grade of three stars while the poorest performers receive no stars at all.

This year there are 11 more three-star acute and specialist trusts (63 in total) although there are now four more zero-star trusts (14 in total). Overall, almost four out of five hospital trusts maintained or improved their standards.

For the first time ratings were awarded to primary care trusts, of which 45 received three stars and 22 zero stars.

Mental health and ambulance trusts were also awarded star ratings.

This year's performance ratings were published for the first time by independent health watchdog, the Commission for Health Improvement. Full details at www.chi.nhs.uk/ratings

Health inequalities action

A three-year plan of action designed to tackle health inequalities has been published.

The strategy clearly sets out responsibilities at local and national level, underlines the importance of preventing ill health and looks at a range of initiatives for improving life expectancy in the most disadvantaged communities.

AHPs have a breadth of experience, knowledge and skill that can be used to influence people's understanding and management of their own health.

The programme of action incorporates tax and welfare reforms to reduce poverty; national service frameworks to improve access to and quality of health services; health action zones directing resources into disadvantaged communities; the neighbourhood renewal strategy; the fuel poverty strategy and investment in early years development through Sure Start.

Tackling Health Inequalities: a Programme for Action is at www.doh.gov.uk/healthinequalities

Network advisors

The following people have been appointed as network advisors, playing a key role in keeping the allied health professions in touch with service delivery. They are:

Alison Strode, podiatrist
Alison Wilson, occupational therapist
Andy Newton, ambulance paramedic
Chris Rowley, orthotist
Francine Thorpe, physiotherapist
Heather Wicks, orthoptist
Liz Hunt, radiographer
Michelle Morris, speech and language therapist

The role of a network advisor is to provide up-to-date advice on practice issues.

The advice required may be on a range of issues but we envisage it will primarily include clinical information on profession-specific interventions.

Useful websites

www.doh.gov.uk/dohreport/index.htm

www.doh.gov.uk/changeagentteam/new.htm

www.doh.gov.uk/extendingchoice/index.htm

www.natpact.nhs.uk

Extended AHP roles

Southampton University is carrying out research on extended roles for AHPs.

The research team are still wanting to make contact with AHPs involved in the development of these roles and, in particular, those who have undertaken any evaluation of these new roles.

The study will be completed at the end of October. AHPs who would like to offer their experiences to the researchers should contact Dr Kath McPherson on 023 8059 6798 or e-mail K.McPherson@soton.ac.uk

Prescribing consultation

Consultation on extending Patient Group Directions to more AHPs is underway.

On 31 July, the Department of Health and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) issued a consultation proposing the extension of Patient Group Directions (PGDs) to dietitians, occupational therapists, prosthetists and orthotists, and speech and language therapists.

The proposals will enable those AHPs to sell, supply or administer medicines under the terms set out in a PGD.

The consultation (MHRA reference MLX 294) will last for eight weeks.

Replies can be sent to Anne Ryan at the MHRA by 30 September.

Full details are at www.mhra.gov.uk

Web resource for AHPs

A valuable resource for AHPs has been provided by the National Primary and Care Trust Development Programme (NatPaCT).

The programme's website offers discussion forums – including one specifically for AHPs – through which new contacts can be made and best practice shared.

The site also includes the PCT Competency Framework – a self-assessment and support tool to help PCTs deliver improved services.

It is at www.natpact.nhs.uk

Research awards

Details and application forms for the Nursing and AHP Researcher Development Awards and Post Doctoral Awards are available from www.doh.gov.uk/research/rd1/nahp.htm

Or for further information contact Barbara Sutherland on 0113 254 3838 or e-mail barbara.sutherland@doh.gsi.gov.uk

Closing date for applications is 1pm, 4 September.

Therapy conference

Chief health professions officer Kay East talked about the changing roles of AHPs at the Annual Therapy Conference.

Kay spoke about the way AHPs are and can improve and deliver services.

The event was hosted by Bracknell Forest Primary Care Trust.

More information at www.berkshire.nhs or e-mail fiona.slevin-brown@berkshire.nhs.uk

Sharing effective practice project

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy's (CSP) *Sharing effective physiotherapy practice* project aims to promote and share good practice to members, other health professionals, health managers, government and the public.

More information at www.csp.org.uk/effective_practice/practice/sharing_effective_practice.cfm

Contact: Sally Brown on 07808 341468, e-mail sally@harperbrown.org or Sue Parroy on 07802 754344, e-mail sue@parroy.prestel.co.uk

Leadership fellows

Young health professionals are being urged to become the 'leaders of tomorrow' by joining the new *Leadership Fellows* scheme.

Successful applicants will receive one-to-one training and take part in leadership masterclasses.

The scheme starts this October and runs until July 2005. The closing date for applications is 19 September.

More information at www.health.org.uk

Children's trust pilot sites

A total of 35 pilot trust sites across England have been announced to bring local health, social and education services into a single structure, to meet the needs of children, young people and their families.

Further information at www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2003_0143

Special educational needs

The Department for Education and Skills has funded a network of special educational needs' regional partnerships.

The aim is to maximise the life chances and educational outcomes of all children and young people by improving regional working practices.

More at www.dfes.gov.uk/sen/viewDocument.cfm?did=161

Contact: claire.lazarus@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Department of Health restructuring

The department has embarked on a major change programme designed to provide more effective leadership to the NHS and social care.

The department's purpose is to support the Government to improve the health and well-being of the population. This remains unchanged but how this is achieved in the future will be very different.

Details, including the department's new structure, board of directors and a timetable for change, are at www.doh.gov.uk/cebuletin/change.htm

Contact: andrew.millward@doh.gsi.gov.uk

Health and Social Care Bill

Government plans to free hospital trusts from Whitehall control have been passed by MPs.

The Health and Social Care Bill, which proposes the introduction of NHS foundation trusts, will now go to the House of Lords before returning to the House of Commons for its final parliamentary procedures.

More information at www.doh.gov.uk/healthandsocialcarebill/index.htm

Conflict resolution

All NHS staff are to receive conflict resolution training to help them defuse potentially violent situations.

This extends the Department of Health's drive to stamp out violence against NHS staff and health professionals.

It follows a report by the House of Commons public accounts committee on the effectiveness of the department's strategies for dealing with violence and aggression.

The report *A Safer Place to Work: Protecting NHS Hospital and Ambulance Staff from Violence and Aggression* is at www.parliament.uk

Orthotics Pathfinder conference

Findings of the orthotics pathfinder pilot sites were discussed at the Orthotics Pathfinder Conference in Leicester on 3 July.

Results from each site were discussed as well as how the problems associated with delivering step change can be overcome to ensure local services learn from the process and secure the national benefits associated with improved service provision.

For more information e-mail Denise.Thomson@pasa.nhs.uk

New emergency care web pages

The Department of Health's emergency care web pages have been updated to reflect current work programmes and to provide a useful source of reports, guidance and toolkits.

The site is at www.doh.gov.uk/emergencycare/

Please send feedback on what you think about the website to emergencycare@doh.gsi.gov.uk

Disabled guide

The Department of Health has published a guide to help disabled people and their carers.

A Practical Guide for Disabled People or Carers has information on where and how to find information, services and equipment.

The guide is at www.doh.gov.uk/disabled_guide/index.htm

Consultant contract

An agreement over the future introduction of a new contract for consultants in the NHS has been reached.

The British Medical Association (BMA) and the Department of Health have now agreed a way forward for introducing the contract which was rejected by consultants last year.

More at www.info.doh.gov.uk/doh/intpress.nsf/page/2003-0271?OpenDocument

Action On projects

A series of pilots have been given the go-ahead to explore ways of modernising and speeding up access to general surgery in the NHS.

In total, 16 sites across England have been awarded *Action On* pilot status and will each receive £90,000 over the next 18 months to redesign services for patients.

More information at www.modern.nhs.uk/action-on

Hip replacements

Patients receiving hip replacements are getting better quality care but more can be achieved to improve choice and speed up access to surgery.

A report, published by the National Audit Office, found that patients have received an improved service over the past three years, including a reduction in their length of stay. The report did raise questions over how some hospitals are prioritising patients for surgery.

The report is at www.nao.gov.uk/publications/nao_reports/02-03/0203956.pdf

Diagnosis and treatment centres update

A new report detailing the progress of the Government's diagnosis and treatment centre (DTC) programme has been published.

Diagnosis and Treatment Centres – A New Service Model is at www.modern.nhs.uk/dtc

A hard copy can be ordered by e-mailing steven.ball@prolog.uk.com quoting reference MA/SIT/DTC/001 and including a postal address.

Humanitarian toolkit

A toolkit aimed at NHS staff who wish to carry out vital humanitarian work overseas has been produced.

International Humanitarian and Health Work: Toolkit to Support Good Practice raises awareness of the issues surrounding the release of NHS health professionals to work in developing countries.

It also shows benefits that such work can bring to individuals' professional development, the NHS and its patients. Case studies of NHS staff involved in such projects are also being published.

More information at www.doh.gov.uk/internationalhumanitarianandhealthwork/index.htm

Research and the NHS in the next decade

The Clinical Research Centre for Health Professions at the University of Brighton hosted the inaugural conference *Research and the NHS in the Next Decade – A Vision*.

The centre's director Professor Ann Moore explained the centre's role in supporting AHP research.

Guest speakers included Department of Health director of research and development Dr Russell Hamilton and chief health professions officer Kay East.

For more information e-mail m.vasquet-whittome@bton.ac.uk

Latest NICE guidelines

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has published guidelines on infection control; head injury; pre-operative tests; and heart failure.

The guidance is at www.nice.org.uk

Contact: martin.teff@doh.gsi.gov.uk or 0113 254 5972

Walk-in centres

New target-focused NHS walk-in centres and services will be developed over the next three years backed by an extra £40 million.

More information at www.nhs.uk/localnhs/services/wiccentres/default.asp

Out-of-hours

A website dedicated to out-of-hours (OOH) health services has been launched by the Department of Health.

The site is at www.out-of-hours.info

Pharmacy vision

The Government has announced a new package of measures to improve the quality of services offered by pharmacists.

A Vision for Pharmacy in the NHS is at www.doh.gov.uk/pharmacyvision

Role of walking in improving health

The Department for Transport has issued a discussion paper – *On the Move: By Foot* – emphasising the role of walking in improving health and preventing disease.

More at www.local-transport.dft.gov.uk/consult/walking/index.htm

Cancelled operations

The latest statistics for cancelled operations have been published by the Department of Health.

More at www.doh.gov.uk/hospitalactivity

Shipman reports

The Home Office is considering reforms to coroners' courts in the light of the latest reports from the Shipman Inquiry.

The reports by the team investigating how GP Harold Shipman was able to kill at least 215 patients were published on 14 July.

The reports are at www.the-shipman-inquiry.org.uk/reports.asp

Reducing inspections bureaucracy

The Government has launched a programme aimed at reducing the burden on frontline NHS staff caused by audits and inspections.

More at www.doh.gov.uk/bureaucracy

Dignity at work

From December, it will be illegal to discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation in the workplace. Guidelines are at

www.gladd.dircon.co.uk/iwl.htm

NHS and Primary Care Magazine

The magazines aim to spread good practice, stimulate debate and keep health professionals working in the NHS up to date with the latest developments. They can be read at

www.nhs.uk/nhsmagazine or www.nhs.uk/nhsmagazine/primarycare/index.asp

Parliamentary questions

The following are recent parliamentary questions relating to AHPs:

Speech therapy degrees, 10 July
www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmhansrd/cm030710/text/30710w38.htm#30710w38.html_sbhd4

Dysphasia, 10 July
www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmhansrd/cm030710/text/30710w35.htm#30710w35.html_sbhd0

Aphasia, 4 July
www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmhansrd/cm030704/text/30704w09.htm#30704w09.html_sbhd0

More information on other questions at www.parliament.uk/hansard/hansard.cfm

Click on advanced search and enter the subject area or the date the question was heard.

Diary

Building bridges

This year's Collaborations in Health and Social Care Conference *Building Bridges*, is being held at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, on 29 and 30 September. The focus is on building and sustaining collaborative partnerships across sector divides.

Keynote speakers include chief health professions officer Kay East.

More at www.ueachas.org.uk

CSP Congress

Defining Practice – the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy's (CSP) Annual Congress and exhibition takes place from 17-19 October at the International Convention Centre, Birmingham.

During the event there will be 10 clinical programmes running, presentations of physiotherapy research, a trade exhibition, the CSP's AGM and awards ceremony and the Founders' Lecture, which will be given by athlete Tanni Grey-Thompson.

More at www.csp.org.uk/congress

Education and training conference

AHPs and education providers are being encouraged to attend the *Closing the Gap* conference, part of the Modernising the Education and Training for the Allied Health Professions project.

It is being organised by York St John College, School of Professional Studies. The college is a pilot site for the project, which focuses on learning, support and development in occupational therapy and physiotherapy.

Chief health professions officer Kay East will talk about Agenda for Change, while the School of Professional Health Studies' head Pauline Gacal will discuss changes in education, routes, students and structures.

It takes place at York Racecourse on 15 October.

Contact: a.candelin@yorks.ac.uk

AHP strategy conference

The *Allied Health Professions' Strategy: how well is it progressing?* conference is being held on 28 October in London.

The one-day conference will examine a range of issues including the therapist as consultant, the Health Professions Council and Agenda for Change. Speakers will include chief health professions officer Kay East and director of industrial relations at the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Richard Griffin.

Contact GateHouse on 020 73473575 or e-mail vicki.taylor@lexisnexis.co.uk

Mental health conference

Meeting the Challenge – New Roles, Relationships and Responsibilities in Primary Care Mental Health conference takes place on 3 October.

It aims to reflect not only the role that primary care will continue to play in mental health care provision but also the major changes that have taken place in the NHS over the last two years.

The Manchester Institute of Health Sciences is hosting the conference, organised by the National Primary Care Research and Development Centre.

Contact: Helena Wilton on 0161 275 7610 or e-mail hwilton@fs1.cpcr.man.ac.uk

Reducing cancelled operations

A one-day conference will be held on 12 November for all levels of staff who have an interest in theatres and pre-operative assessment.

This event will introduce delegates to fresh thinking to optimise capacity for day and inpatient surgery. Delegates will explore the benefits of using teams from abroad, effective use of day and inpatient surgery, increasing bed capacity through pre-operative assessment and the theory of constraints.

Contact: Kelly Giles on 0116 2225146 or e-mail kelly.giles@npat.nhs.uk

This conference is organised by the NHS Modernisation Agency's operating theatre and pre-operative assessment programme.

More at www.modern.nhs.uk/theatreprogram

Prescribing conference

Non-doctor prescribing: is it making a difference to patients? is a one-day conference being held on 29 October in London.

It will explore experiences so far in new prescribing roles. It is aimed at senior clinical professionals with prescribing responsibilities, educators providing training for non-doctor prescribers, PCT pharmaceutical advisers and senior NHS managers responsible for modernisation.

Contact GateHouse on 020 73473575 or e-mail vicki.taylor@lexisnexis.co.uk

Back in Work workshops

Four workshops promoting the *Back in Work* campaign will be held in September.

The campaign aims to reduce the incidents that can lead to back pain.

More at www.nhs.uk/backinwork/news.htm

Contact Mary Newsome on 0113 254 5581 or e-mail Mary.Newsome@doh.gsi.gov.uk

■ If you have an event for AHPs that you would like publicising in this bulletin e-mail kay.east@doh.gsi.gov.uk