The year in nursing

JANUARY
Single rooms were less safe than traditional wards, said 49 per cent of 1,200 nurses surveyed by Nursing Times. Difficulties in observation resulted in incidents such as suicides, lines being pulled out and assaults on nurses.
Scotland appointed Ros Moore as its chief nursing officer.
Salford Royal Foundation Trust discussed accident and emergency targets with prime minister Gordon Brown at a reception for the 2009 Nursing Times Awards winners at 10 Downing Street.
The average student nurse could expect to graduate with debts of up to £7,000, the Union annual student survey warned.
Former nurse Colin Norris, who murdered four patients at two hospitals, won permission to appeal against his 30 year jail sentence. He lost the appeal.
Claire Bertschringer, the nurse who inspired Bob Geldof to set up Band Aid, was made a dame in the New Year honours list.

FEBRUARY
Nursing Times exclusively revealed the final report of the Prime Minister’s Commission on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery. Among its recommendations, it said that all nurses should make a pledge showing their commitment to high quality care, engagement with service improvement and professional accountability. It also called for immediate steps to strengthen the role of sisters and backed nursing becoming a graduate only entry profession.
New Nursing and Midwifery Council chief executive and registrar Dickon Weir-Hughes said he wanted to “build bridges” with the profession but that the regulator’s main role was to protect patients. In a major interview with Nursing Times, he said: “In terms of our mission, whether nurses like us or not is more or less irrelevant.”

MARCH
The NHS staff survey showed that trusts where the majority of nurses said they were happy were more likely to be scored “excellent” for quality of services by the Care Quality Commission. A row erupted after a bus firm in Worcestershire ran an advert with a “sexy” nurse wearing a PVC uniform on vehicles on a route that served a hospital.
Nursing Times found patients were routinely being treated in hospital areas not designed for care, including storerooms, mop cupboards and a kitchen.
Seven nurses who had made a major contribution to professional practice were inducted into the Nursing Times Hall of Fame.

APRIL
An investigation by Nursing Times revealed that student nurses often passed placements even when mentors had serious concerns. In the survey of nearly 2,000 mentors, 37 per cent said they had passed students who they felt should fail, or whose competencies or attitude concerned them. The Nursing and Midwifery Council said it would act immediately on this.
Nurses in Wales started to wear national, colour coded uniforms – only for scores of them to report developing rashes.

A Nursing Times survey revealed that NHS organisations were ignoring nurses’ wellbeing by failing to allow proper breaks and ignoring the needs of those who worked antisocial hours.
Christian nurse Shirley Chaplin lost her discrimination claim against Royal Devon and Exeter Foundation Trust after refusing to remove a crucifix at work.
Health secretary Andy Burnham said that 95 per cent of trusts in England had “virtually eliminated” mixed sex accommodation by the government’s 1 April deadline.

MAY
Clinical nurse specialists were being sent to work on wards, an investigation by Nursing Times found. The move, by trusts trying to save money, sparked concerns as specialists feared they would have to carry out tasks they had not done for several years.
A dearth of training and guidance meant nurses were failing to follow “last offices” procedures, a report shared with Nursing Times revealed.
The general election ushered in a Democrat government, and former nurse Anne Milton became a health minister.
Dying patients were being denied adequate medication to control symptoms and relieve pain because nurses feared prosecution for assisting suicide, a Nursing Times survey revealed.
Nurses around the world marked the centenary of the death of Florence Nightingale on International Nurses Day on 12 May.
The Queen’s Nursing Institute appointed the 100th Queen’s Nurse since the prestigious title was reintroduced in 2007.

JUNE
Chancellor George Osborne said pay for all public sector workers earning £21,000 or more would be frozen for two years – although this would not apply to Agenda for Change increments.
in guidance via eight high impact actions, shared exclusively with Nursing Times.

JULY
One in four nurses would go on strike over working conditions and threats to services, a survey of more than 5,000 readers found, as fears about job security mounted.

Health secretary Andrew Lansley published his white paper, which proposed sweeping changes to how the NHS is run. The Royal College of Nursing launched its Frontline First campaign to show cuts were harming care.

Nursing Times discovered that patchy funding for practice nurse training was leading to “uneasy” alliances with the drugs industry.

In her first interview with Nursing Times, health minister Anne Milton pledged to protect frontline nurses and give them more control over care decisions.

The Care Quality Commission heavily criticised out of hours care provider Take Care Now for unsafestaffing levels, for example having one nurse as the only clinical cover for a 70 mile area.

AUGUST
Senior nurses said the profession must change its approach to end of life care for long term conditions, after a groundbreaking report showed patients with respiratory and cardiovascular disease were significantly more likely to die in hospital than at home, compared with those who have cancer.

Attempts to transform nursing care were threatened by plans to axe the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement, nurse leaders warned in Nursing Times. The institute introduced the Productive Ward series and the high impact actions.

Hundreds of nurses were risking their registrations by bending prescribing rules to deliver cosmetic procedures, Nursing Times revealed. The Nursing and Midwifery Council confirmed it was aware of nurses without prescribing qualifications issuing injectable cosmetic medicines such as Botox.

SEPTEMBER
Nursing Times uncovered secret plans by foundation trusts to offer nurses immunity from redundancy if they agreed to have their Agenda for Change proposals frozen.

We then revealed the government was considering fast tracking health visitor training to meet its pledge of recruiting an extra 4,200 health visitors by 2015, and that acute trusts relied on nurses to earn them £280m a year in quality payments.

OCTOBER
A tetraplegic, Jamie Merrett, was left with brain damage after agency nurse Violetta Aylward accidentally turned off his ventilator. Senior nurses warned the case demonstrated how skills in overstretched community nurse teams were being diluted.

Chancellor George Osborne said nurses and other public workers would have to pay more towards pensions and retirees.

Tributes poured in after former nurse, health writer and patient advocate Claire Rayner died aged 79.

Ms Rayner, who began her literary career with a letter to Nursing Times in 1958, signed off with a warning to “come back and haunt” prime minister David Cameron if he failed to improve care.

A Nursing Times investigation found hundreds of thousands of patients were being moved between wards with no clinical justification, which could spread infection. Each year, 1.3 million such moves were made.

NOVEMBER
Chief nursing officer for England Dame Christine Beasley announced she would step down in March after six years.

Nursing Times exclusively revealed the government was considering a U-turn on maternity services, with GPs now likely to be commissioning them instead of the new NHS commissioning board.

The Department of Health published a position statement on the first national standards for advanced nurse practitioners and the Royal College of Nursing launched eight principles for nursing practice.

An HCA from Stoke, Brenda Nixon, got into trouble for writing a note criticising her hospital for providing beds for end of life care patients, which would be occupied for only two days. A Nursing Times survey revealed that a quarter of nurses involved in end of life care felt they had insufficient skills and training in discussing this with patients.

As the Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust Public Inquiry started, the Royal College of Nursing hit the headlines for saying that nearly 27,000 NHS posts across the UK had been earmarked to be cut.

Nurses from Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals Trust won the chief nursing officer’s award at the 2010 Nursing Times Awards for improving acute care for patients with learning disabilities.

DECEMBER
Nursing Times launched its A Seat on the Board campaign, to push for nursing influence at the highest level of the GP consortia that will have control of the bulk of NHS funding in April 2013.

While nurses and midwives struggled to work through the snow, Nursing Times learnt they were not entitled to the national public holiday to celebrate the royal wedding on 29 April next year. Wording in the Agenda for Change contract meant it would be at trusts’ discretion.

The public health white paper said more than £500m was to be invested in recruiting and training extra health visitors. Reporting and research by Karla Mills