“With funding, district nurses can train HCAs to support them”

I have been asking myself whether effective district nursing is practical in the current financial climate and whether patients feel adequately supported in the community rather than in hospital.

We currently have an evolving NHS system, with a shift from hospital care provision to a community care focus. The frequency and extent of changes in the health service often frightens health professionals let alone patients. Speaking to service users and colleagues I have found them questioning whether community services can provide suitable care for acutely ill patients.

Those providing care in the community, particularly those offered by district nursing services, have recognised the growing importance of listening to patients. As a result, services have developed over the years to suit patients’ practical needs. The district nursing service understands that looking after the community is not a “one size fits all” approach and works alongside other health professionals to provide care that is fit for each individual.

So, going back to the initial question of whether district nursing is practical in the current financial climate and whether patients feel supported: this could be seen as unsustainable in practice due to increased demands on community services and nurses. However, more funding is on its way and this can only help improve service delivery in the community. More nurses will be available with more clinical expertise – and they will be able to train healthcare assistants to support district nursing services further ensuring there is a service that delivers the care patients want in their own homes. NT

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Good foot care is vital for all older people

Foot care is an important aspect of essential nursing that can be overlooked. Three out of four older people are likely to have foot problems and many cannot care for their own feet for a range of reasons, including not being able to actually reach them. Our practice educator article on page 12 zeroes in on this area of fundamental care, highlighting the impact poor foot care can have on mobility and functional ability.

Foot problems can cause pain and increase the risk of trips and falls. This expert article discusses foot problems that are common in older people and relates these to the ageing process, making it easier to understand why they have occurred and how best to manage them. The article also includes how to carry out foot care and reminds us that it is not just patients with diabetes who need it.