What does the future hold for community nurses?

This month Hallam Medical, the nursing recruitment agency, celebrates its tenth anniversary, and over that time we have placed a lot of nurses in exciting new roles as well as developing our commitment to nurse education. During this period, there have also been a lot of changes in the wider world of community nursing. But, as we work in an ever-evolving environment, what changes can we expect in the future and, more importantly, are we actually ready for them?

Having co-founded Hallam Medical I have to say the last ten years have flown by, but despite it only being a decade, an awful lot has happened, in primary care in particular. Not only have the health needs of the general population altered significantly — witness the major growth in chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity for example — but the nursing profession as a whole has had to change, evolve and adapt to meet these new challenges.

Since we launched the agency in 2007, the NHS (and indeed the country) has battled through a recession, experienced two changes of government and two secretaries of state’s for health, seen the introduction of The Five Year Forward View and a new health and social care bill, not to mention the Care Closer to Home programme, which aims to move services away from secondary care and deliver more healthcare in the community.

So much more is now expected of nurses, and I feel that, as a profession, we have really stepped up to these challenges. We are better educated, more highly trained and therefore more able to think critically and make complex clinical decisions.

‘So many people already use smartphones and surely it is only a matter of time before we are using this kind of technology within our role?’

The publication of the Five Year Forward View and the Care Closer to Home programme have also meant that there is now a huge focus on community nursing and community-based admission avoidance schemes. Similarly, as our population continues to grow older and live longer, more and more patients will need to be treated in a community setting. I am absolutely certain this ever-increasing demand will ensure community nurses continue to play a vital role in the way the population is cared for in the future. Celebrating our anniversary has made me think a great deal, not only about what has changed in the recent past, but also what the next ten years might hold for nurses.

Going forward, I have no doubt even more will be expected of us, especially in the community. As well as managing chronic conditions, I think community nurses will be essential in the promotion of health and wellbeing, educating patients about how they can manage their own health and prevent chronic conditions rather than curing them.

TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

With such innovative and exciting advances in technology such as smartphones and apps already widely used in all aspects of private and public life, there is no doubt this will be key to our role in the future and will change the shape of nursing.

So many people already use smartphone technology to monitor their activity and health — witness the advent of exercise apps that monitor heart rate and count calories for example — and surely it is only a matter of time before we are using this kind of technology within our nursing roles. I can easily envisage a time when we be using smartphones for blood pressure monitoring and checking glucose levels, and looking further into the future, how many of us will live in dementia-friendly villages — either as a nurse or a patient — or be transported around in driverless cars? The potential opportunities are exciting and endless.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Although an awful lot has changed in the past decade, and will continue to change even more in the next ten years, one thing will definitely remain the same. As nurses, our ability to look after patients and offer real person-to-person contact is something that will be needed as long as we have patients to care for. No technology, however smart, will be able to replace that.
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I used to dread my nurse coming to look after my leg ulcers, they were just so painful. I’d get very anxious when it came to a Monday morning, knowing she was on her way. No matter what we tried, my wounds simply wouldn’t heal and it was really starting to get me down.

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ABBREVIATED PRESCRIBING INFORMATION:
Cetraben® Ointment Presentation: An opaque white ointment. Main ingredients: White soft paraffin 35.0% w/w, Light liquid paraffin 45.0% w/w. Indications: An emollient used to moisturise and soften dry skin in eczema, dry cases of psoriasis and other dry skin conditions. Also used as a skin cleanser or bath additive. Dosage and Administration: Adults, the elderly and children. As an emollient: Apply to the affected areas as often as required, Smooth gently into the skin, following the direction of the hair growth. As a bath additive: Melt about 4g in hot water in a suitable container then add to the bath. As a soap substitute: Take a small amount of the ointment and lather it under warm water and use as required when washing or in the shower. Pat skin dry.

Cetraben® Cream Presentation:
Main ingredients:
1. White soft paraffin 5.0% w/w, Light liquid paraffin 4.0% w/w.
Indications: An emollient, moisturising and protective cream for the symptoms of red, inflamed, dry or chapped skin, especially when associated with endogenous or exogenous eczema. Dosage and Administration: Adults: Apply to the affected areas as often as required and rub in until absorbed. Children: Add half a capful to a warm water bath or apply with a wet sponge to wet skin before showering. Contra-indications: Hyper-sensitivity to any of the ingredients. Special Warnings and Precautions: Care should be taken in allergy to any of the ingredients is suspected. Care should also be exercised when entering or leaving the bath. Avoid contact with the eyes. Side Effects: Very rarely, mild skin reactions have been seen. Marketing Authorisation Numbers: Cetraben Emollient Bath Additive. PL 06331/0260 Basic NHS Price: £0.57 Legal Category: GSL. Date of Preparation: 05.11.2015.

Cetraben® Emollient Bath Additive Light Liquid Paraffin
Please refer to Summary of Product Characteristics before prescribing. Dosage and Administration: Adults: As a bath additive. Add one or two capfuls; Children: add half a capful to a warm water bath or apply with a wet sponge to wet skin before showering. Contra-indications: Hypersensitivity to any of the ingredients. Special Warnings and Precautions: Unlikely to have any effect when used as directed. If unsure, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. Side Effects: None known. Pack size: 50g, 125g & 450g. Trade Price: 125g: £3.49 450g: £3.99 Medical Device: Class I. Manufacturer: Thornton & Ross Limited, Huddersfield, HD7 5QH. Date of preparation: 05.11.2015.

Cetraben® Ointment Presentation: An opaque white ointment. Main ingredients: White soft paraffin 35.0% w/w, Light liquid paraffin 45.0% w/w. Indications: An emollient used to moisturise and soften dry skin in eczema, dry cases of psoriasis and other dry skin conditions. Also used as a skin cleanser or bath additive. Dosage and Administration: Adults, the elderly and children. As an emollient: Apply to the affected areas as often as required, Smooth gently into the skin, following the direction of the hair growth. As a bath additive: Melt about 4g in hot water in a suitable container then add to the bath. As a soap substitute: Take a small amount of the ointment and lather it under warm water and use as required when washing or in the shower. Pat skin dry. Contra-indications: Hypersensitivity to any of the ingredients. Precautions: For external use only. May cause local skin reactions. Avoid contact with eyes. Baths and showers may become slippery when used. If this product comes into contact with dressings and clothes, it can be more easily ignited with a naked flame. Keep away from naked flames when using this product. Do not use if you are allergic to any of the ingredients listed. Talk to your doctor before use if the skin is badly cracked, infected or bleeding. Pregnancy and breastfeeding: Unlikely to have any effect when used as directed. If unsure, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. Side Effects: None known. Pack size: 50g, 125g & 450g. Trade Price: 125g: £3.49 450g: £3.99 Medical Device: Class I. Manufacturer: Thornton & Ross Limited, Huddersfield, HD7 5QH. Date of preparation: 05.11.2015.

Cetraben® Cream Presentation:
Main ingredients:
1. White soft paraffin 35.0% w/w, Light liquid paraffin 45.0% w/w.
Indications: An emollient, moisturising and protective cream for the symptoms of red, inflamed, dry or chapped skin, especially when associated with endogenous or exogenous eczema. Dosage and Administration: Adults: Apply to the affected areas as often as required and rub in until absorbed. Children: Add half a capful to a warm water bath or apply with a wet sponge to wet skin before showering. Contra-indications: Hypersensitivity to any of the ingredients. Special Warnings and Precautions: Care should be taken in allergy to any of the ingredients is suspected. Care should also be exercised when entering or leaving the bath. Avoid contact with the eyes. Side Effects: Very rarely, mild skin reactions have been seen. Marketing Authorisation Numbers: Cetraben Emollient Bath Additive. PL 06331/0260 Basic NHS Price: £0.57 Legal Category: GSL. Date of Preparation: 05.11.2015.

Cetraben® Lotion Presentation: A smooth white lotion. Main ingredients: White soft paraffin 50.0% w/w, Light liquid paraffin 40.0% w/w. Indications: For the relief of the symptoms of eczema, dermatitis and other dry skin conditions. Dosage and Administration: Adults, the elderly and children. Apply to the skin and gently rub in until absorbed. Use as often as required, or as directed by your doctor or pharmacist. Contra-indications: Hypersensitivity to any of the ingredients. Precautions: For external use only. Do not swallow. Avoid contact with eyes. May cause local skin reactions. Talk to your doctor before use if the skin is badly cracked, infected or bleeding. Do not use if allergic to any of the ingredients. Pregnancy and breastfeeding: Using Cetraben Lotion during pregnancy and breastfeeding is unlikely to have any ill effects. If unsure, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. Side effects: Mild allergic skin reactions. Pack size: 200ml & 500ml Rx packs. 50ml, 200ml & 500ml (with 475ml refill) OTC packs. Trade Price: 200ml: £4.00 500ml: £6.64 500ml OTC: £3.02 200ml OTC: £4.00 500ml (with 475ml refill) OTC: £7.25 Medical Device: Class I. Legal Manufacturer: Thornton & Ross Limited, Huddersfield, HD7 5QH. Date of preparation: 05.11.2015.