

INO Update on the work of the Commission on the Implementation of a



Hour Week

for Nurses & Midwives

THE COMMISSION on the implementation of a 35-hour working week has been meeting every two weeks throughout the summer and is continuing its deliberations and working towards the final submission later in the year.

Consultative meetings were held in the following locations throughout the country: Dublin; Carrickmacross; Kilkenny; Cork; Limerick; Galway; Letterkenny; and Tullamore. Approximately 750 participants attended. A briefing was given by the Commission chairperson and a video presentation was given by Prof Phillip Della, on the Australian experience, in locations where he was not attending in person. Participants were invited to discuss three questions and the main issues that evolved from the consultative meetings are summarised as follows:

- Non-nursing duties, role of healthcare assistants, skill mix, clarity of protocols and delegation
- The utilisation of nurses' and midwives' skills, the expansion of their roles to include: IV cannulation, prescribing, ordering tests and x-rays, pre-admission clinics and discharge planning
- Support structures, clerical, pharmacy, portering, expansion of other hospital services, eg. catering and cleaning. Access to other clinical services on a 24/7 basis
- More integration of hospital and community, better communication and more patients being treated at home, chronic diseases, eg. bronchitis, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, etc.
- The role of the CNM2, lack of supernumerary status, the continuous responsibilities
- The rituals that continue to increase workload and put pressure on staff
- Rostering, the difficulties in staffing areas and the cost of agency and overtime
- The lack of effective technology
- The dis-empowerment of nurse/midwifery managers and the need for devolved budgets.

Research

The Commission invited research consortia to tender for research to inform the process of implementing a 35-hour week for nursing/midwifery staff in Ireland. York Health Economics

Consortium were chosen to undertake the research. There are five members in the Consortium, members are from York University, TCD Centre of Health Economics, London University and Cardiff School of Nursing and Midwifery. The objective of the research, which was to be completed by September 25, was to examine best practice in the activities and deployment of nurses and midwives in healthcare internationally by conducting four research tasks:

- An analysis of the tasks and roles of nurses and midwives in the clinical setting – literature review
- Production of an occupational profile of healthcare in Ireland
- Observational analysis of the nurse/midwife role
- Examination of the possibilities for re-organisation of nursing duties.

These objectives were to be addressed through the following research questions:

- What are the roles of nurses and midwives in service provision healthcare systems in developed countries?
- What factors account for the variation in these roles?
- To what extent are different roles for nurses and midwives associated with the quality of patient experiences and out-comes?
- What are the roles of nurses and midwives in the Irish health services?
- How does practice in Ireland compare to that in comparable countries?
- To what extent would it be feasible to change the roles of nurses and midwives in Ireland, and could that be done in a way that retains and improves experiences and outcomes for patients?
- What would be the effects of changes in roles for nurses and midwives on motivation and retention of these professional groups?
- What would be the effects of changing roles of nurses and midwives on the roles of other professional and service delivery staff?

- How would changing roles of nurses and midwives in Ireland affect the cost of service delivery?

International expertise

The Commission has investigated various methods of flexible working including annualised hours, compressed hours, flex time and time banking.

Dr Ginette Rodger, RN, senior VP, Professional Practice, and Chief Nursing Executive, Ottawa Hospital, Canada was invited to speak to the Commission on the August 19. Nurse managers, Executive Council and staff met with Ginette the following day.

Three members of the Commission are due to visit Australia the second week of September, for one week, to look at workforce reform, models of care, rostering and ambulatory care.

The Commission will meet with stakeholders between October 6-11. The Commission will then have another round of consultative meetings throughout the country in the same locations as previous starting on October 22. These will be arranged through the NMPDU's. The final report will be given to the Minister for Health on December 18.

Research activity by the INO for the Commission on the implementation of a 35 hour week.

INO submission

The INO is addressing the following issues in its submission to the Commission:

- Non value added activities and recommendations for efficient working. The observations of activities by the nurse researchers will inform the submission.
- Role of the CNM2. The INO observed the activities of a small number of CNM2's and held a focus group meeting to inform the submission.
- Effective utilisation of the role of the nurse and midwife including the expanded role
- Nurse and midwifery led services and current initiatives in Ireland and abroad

- Use of IT to support nursing/midwifery
- Support structures in the ward/community care area
- Flexible working and effective use of resources.

As part of the submission to the commission on the 35 hour working week for nurses/midwives, the two nurse researchers carried out observational studies in randomly selected clinical settings. A total of 30 clinical settings and 43 nurses were observed. Participating areas included Care of the Older Persons, Paediatrics, Midwifery, Community, Intellectual Disability and General hospitals.

The aim of the observational study was to:

- Identify the type and frequency of non value added activities being carried out by nurses and midwives.
- Activity analysis and process flow mapping of common nursing/midwifery activities in order to identify any organisational and/or environmental factors impacting on the time nurses/midwives should spend on nursing care.
- Comparison of findings with other research work in this area with particular reference to the effect of current work arrangements on quality of care and patient safety.

The research activity tool used was aimed at identifying the time spent on direct care, indirect care, and non value added activities and personal/miscellaneous. The data collected is currently being analysed and results will form part of the INO's submission to the Commission on the Implementation of the 35 hour working week.

A number of letters were sent to members in Health Care Facilities seeking information on innovative practice. Information can be sent to the Irish Nurses Organisation.

The Nurse Researchers would like to thank all the nurses and their organisations who participated in the study for their warm welcome and support.