

# 70 years of nursing progress

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I am feeling a little nostalgic this year. This may be because I am preparing to retire from the NHS after 37 years in July or because the NHS is celebrating its 70th birthday this year. Either way, it has prompted me to think about the role of nursing: the changes we have witnessed since its foundation and what the future might bring.

When I trained, we wore hats, cuffs, belts with lovely silver buckles and, yes, we wore our uniform with pride. But what was wound care like? We didn't have the current range of dressings or compression therapy, and barrier protection was based around napkin rash products. We didn't have negative pressure wound therapy, but I recall patients with chronic cavity wounds who would have benefited from this management approach.

The challenge today is, perhaps, knowing how to select from the wide range of modern dressings, and ensuring that, as clinicians, we have the knowledge to use them appropriately. While access to information online and the increasing range of research are clearly positive developments, it is also a challenge to keep up to date with the amount of evidence to support the assessment of people with chronic wounds.

The NHS is currently focusing on a number of indicators, including wound assessment, as part of the Commissioning for Quality and Innovation initiative, which will have clear benefits for patients (NHS England, 2016). A significant development would be an agreement on a nationwide strategy for wound care. Discussion on this proposal follows a debate held in the House of Lords last November, with a further meeting planned next month, with the Wound Care Alliance UK (WCAUK) ably represented by Professor Richard White. I look forward to this development and the difference it will make to patient care.

Nursing remains a female-dominated profession, and the current focus on gender equality raises questions about nurse pay and conditions, yet there have been significant

achievements. Perhaps you celebrated International Women's Day on 8 March, which was a timely reminder of the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.

This feels important in a female-dominated profession yet, despite the progress, nursing has struggled to achieve full recognition. In my career, I have witnessed the move to an all-degree profession, which has been both a challenge and an achievement. And, despite compelling evidence linking knowledge to patient safety (Davies, 2018), the move to an all-degree profession continues to be questioned.

Importantly, there is an increasing focus on giving the NHS and its staff the recognition they deserve. To celebrate the 70th birthday of the NHS, MPs have launched the NHS70 Parliamentary Awards. Check out the award categories and make nominations by visiting [www.nhs70awards.co.uk](http://www.nhs70awards.co.uk)

NHS England is also offering resources to help staff, NHS organisations, partners and educators to celebrate the anniversary. This includes compiling a digital archive of stories and memorabilia contributed by patients, workers, volunteers and the public, as well as charting the cultural history of the NHS. You can take part by:

- Exploring the plans and contributing your stories at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/nhs70>
- Joining the conversation on social media using #NHS70

I will enjoy reading the stories and, while I am retiring from the NHS, I will continue as WCAUK chair. If you are interested in joining us as a trustee, please see our advert on [www.wcauk.org](http://www.wcauk.org).

Davies J. Nursing is not 'women's work'. 2018. <https://tinyurl.com/y8bbx9c4> (accessed 12 March 2018)

NHS England. Commissioning for quality and innovation (COUIN). Guidance for 2017-2019. 2016. <https://tinyurl.com/yb63vmca> (accessed 12 March 2018)

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