



Left: Sister Ethel Buckles, Dr Mark Doyle (right) and staff nurse John Seddon discuss a patient
Bottom left: Sister Gilchrist with patient in A&E waiting room
Bottom right: Sister Roughley with sister Buckles at the triage desk



Table 4. Advantages and disadvantages of triage calls

Advantages

To patient:

A phone call begins personal care
 More convenient, less waiting

To GPs:

Better access to A&E
 Queries answered
 Better response for individual patient

To community:

More efficient patient-oriented service
 Better public perception of what they can do for themselves and how we can help them

To hospital:

Financial savings
 More efficient service

To A&E:

Less workload
 More control
 More satisfaction, less aggravation

Disadvantages

Triage nurse can be heavily committed
 Can be stressful if there is:
 a) poor nurse staffing levels
 b) poor medical support
 Shift in attitudes required

times the patient) will telephone and make an appointment through the triage nurse for definitive care to be carried out at the patient's (and our) convenience, without the necessity for any preliminary visit. Parents frequently ring us regarding their children and, for example, we can tell the mother of a child who has swallowed contraceptive pills that the only person at risk is the mother herself. We may say to a patient phoning us, 'Yes, we do need to see you, but we are extremely busy, so perhaps it would be best if you were to come in at a more convenient time. Please phone again before you set off.' We are beginning to feel more confident about telling inappropriate attenders that they should not be here — and telling patients how well (or badly) they have handled a situation before arrival in A&E.

We receive about 20 telephone calls a

day and invite about two-thirds of these patients in for treatment. New attendances are down by 2% for the first time this year, and 5% are being redirected elsewhere.

Extended triage can be hard work but, after examining the advantages and disadvantages, we believe that our campaign is paying dividends (see Table 4).

The introduction of extended triage was straightforward but it has been hard to maintain at times. The triage nurse can be under considerable pressure when the department is busy and it is essential that she receives assistance when necessary. The documentation takes time, including all patients treated by the nurse, and we will benefit enormously from the computerised patient information system which we hope to introduce early next year. When the A&E is under the greatest pressure

the extended skills of the experienced triage nurse become most evident.

As long ago as 1869, a letter appeared in the *Lancet* protesting about the abuse of accident and emergency departments². We believe that extended triage will do much to limit this abuse and allow us to provide a better service for patients whom we are appropriately equipped and staffed to treat, and to offer a positive alternative to others.

NT

REFERENCES

¹Wood, T.C.A., Cliff, K.S. Accident and emergency departments — why people attend with minor injuries and ailments. *Public Health* 1986; 100; 15-20.

²Lancet investigation into the administration of the out-patient department of the London hospitals. *Lancet* 1869; 553.

Ethel Buckles is clinical nurse manager, accident and emergency department and Michael Carew-McColl is consultant in accident and emergency medicine, Royal Preston Hospital, Preston

DRUGS

HANDBOOK 1990-91

PAUL TURNER, GLYN VOLANS
and HEATHER WISEMAN

£9.95

DRUGS
HANDBOOK
1990-91

QUICK AND EASY
TO USE

This new edition of the DRUGS HANDBOOK provides nurses with up to date information on drugs currently available in the United Kingdom.

Although prescribing of medicines is the responsibility of a doctor, the drugs which medicines contain may influence patients in many ways. It is important that others involved in a patient's health care should have ready access to information on the various medicines prescribed or bought over the counter.

All drugs are listed under their brand names and under their generic names. In each case the Handbook explains

- mechanism of action
- therapeutic indications
- main unwanted effects

What's more, it flags drugs that have recently been discontinued, but which the nurse may still come across in the course of his/her work.

This revised edition contains new products introduced during the last year and has been fully revised to take account of withdrawals and revisions.

To make sure you have the latest drugs information at YOUR fingertips, simply complete the form below.

NURSING TIMES BOOK SERVICE

ORDER FORM

Please send me _____ copy/ies of the
DRUGS HANDBOOK 1990-91 at £9.95 0-333-53253-8

I enclose a cheque for _____ made payable to NURSING
TIMES BOOK SERVICE Add £1.50 for each book posted overseas
(BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE)

Name _____

Address _____

Please send this coupon (with payment) to: Nursing
Times Book Service, MediTec, York House, 26
Bourne Road, Colsterworth, Lincs. NG33 5JE

M
MACMILLAN

WE'VE STRETCHED OUR DEALS TO THE LIMIT FOR NURSES



PANDA



UNO



TIPO



CROMA



TEMPRA

WE HAVE THE POWER TO OFFER
YOU BRITAIN'S BEST DEALS ON
NEW FIATS! As the UK's largest Fiat
dealer and part of the Fiat
organisation, we can bring you
deals direct from the manufacturer
on every tempting model. Choose
from the practical Panda, versatile
Uno, spacious 5-door Tipo, elegant
Croma and luxurious Tempra.

Britain's best Fiat deals for
Nurses revealed on
071 486 7555

FIAT
Motor Sales

NOBODY KNOWS MORE ABOUT FIAT

Phone our hotline for a free quote -
we'll have the perfect price
including delivery and the option of
competitive finance facilities.
It's unlikely, but if you're not
completely satisfied with your new
Fiat, you can return it for another or
have a cash refund!
That's Fiat Motor Sales
satisfaction guaranteed.

AD019

62-64 Baker Street, London W1M 1DJ 071 486 7555

*Within 14 days or 500 miles, whichever comes first. Licensed credit broker.