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BAPEN Update

This is my last column this year, and what a strange year it has been for us all so far. Of course, we are all also facing a long and hard winter in the NHS this year, with no doubt many challenges still to come.

In any other year, this column would be focused on a look forward to the joys of our annual conference. This year we won't be congregating in Brighton as planned, but instead will be going virtual for the first time in our history!

From the 9th - 19th November we have a series of 'dine and dial-in' sessions online in the evening from 6-8pm. If you're a BAPEN member all content is free, if not you can still access all the content for a small fee, which includes free membership for a whole year. All the details are on our website. The programme is going to be very good, with very topical sessions exploring some of the lessons we have learned through the COVID-19 response. My thanks go to our outstanding team who have put such a brilliant programme together. It is important to find silver linings in this strange year, and for me, the silver lining here will be that some people will be able to 'join' our conference proceedings for the first time when there is no need for travel or time off work. I will look forward to 'seeing you there' in a remote sense!

I am delighted to say that The Malnutrition Action Group has reported excellent engagement with our national survey of malnutrition and nutritional care, which closed a few days ago after being open throughout October. Many thanks to those of you who were able to contribute to this huge national screening effort. This is the second year that we have run this survey, and the first that we have made the portal open for a whole month. It provides a significant evidence base for us. Not only does it pull data for the first time from a wide range of health and social care settings, but it is also the first survey to look at both malnutrition and nutritional care interventions. This is hugely important as it gives us a more comprehensive and contextualised picture. The excellent Malnutrition Action Group team will report on the findings in due course, and you can find the 2019 report on our website.

The survey coincided in part with this year's UK Malnutrition Awareness Week which was a huge success once again. I have been cheered by the efforts of nutrition champions across the UK who worked so hard and so creatively to raise awareness of malnutrition during the week despite challenging circumstances this year. I am always glad that we are able to work together with The Malnutrition Task Force on this campaign, and this year it felt more important than ever, particularly to communicate the risks amongst those who have been isolated, and to highlight the importance of nutrition in recovery from COVID-19.

Autumn was also a busy time for our Nasogastric Special Interest Group (NGSIG) who published a position paper 'Time to put patient safety first', exploring how safety has been compromised across Trusts and Health Boards, leading to nasogastric tube placement 'Never Events'. This paper, published on World Patient Safety Day, is clear about where responsibility for this issue lies, and is a welcome reminder that things must change to keep patients safe and, indeed, healthcare professionals too. The NGSIG has worked incredibly hard all year to represent patient and professional interests and I would invite you to read and share the report.

Our COVID-19 response protocols and guidelines remain available on our website and I would urge you to consult them as needed through this winter. It remains our priority to help you all navigate these exceptionally difficult times. My thanks to you all for your support and appreciation of our work this year. Stay safe.

For our COVID-19 resources visit:

www.bapen.org.uk/resources-and-education/education-and-guidance/covid-19

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