

A CHARTER FOR

RHEUMATOLOGY

NURSING

A CHARTER FOR RHEUMATOLOGY NURSING

A NURSING COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

The RCN Rheumatology Nursing Forum exists as a National Resource to support nurses in providing high quality care for patients with Rheumatic Diseases and acts as a pressure group on their behalf.

The Forum collaborates and liaises closely with many related professional and charitable organisations in the cause of promoting a better understanding of these diseases both nationally and internationally.

The RCN Rheumatology Nursing Forum believes that the standard of Rheumatology nursing provided to patients nationally should be of the highest quality. The introduction of a Charter for Rheumatology Nursing is strongly welcomed by the Forum as it gives an opportunity to establish not only Rheumatology nursing care provision which patients are entitled to expect, but also gives an opportunity to set down the standards of service which the Forum membership feel should be provided in partnership with patients.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A CHARTER FOR RHEUMATOLOGY NURSING P1 **A Nursing Commitment to Quality**

The Charter Entitlements (Section A)

- Pain Relief
 - Achieving Optimal Independence and Mobility
 - Mobility
 - Maintaining Care of the Skin
- } P3
- Achieving adequate Nutrition
 - Coping with Deformity/Change in Body Image
 - Coping with Altered Life Style
 - Learning to Manage the Disease
- } P4

The Role of the Rheumatology Nursing Team (Section B)

- Accessibility
 - Information and Assistance
- } P5
- Coping Strategies
 - The Patients Role
- } P6
- The Nurse Specialist Role P7
 - Summary of the Charter P8
 - Acknowledgments of the Working Party P9

THE CHARTER ENTITLEMENTS (SECTION A)

This section gives details of Rheumatological patients entitlements when assessing the Rheumatology Nursing Service. In other words the standards that the patients *should be offered*. In partnership with a nurse specialising in Rheumatology the patient should be empowered in areas such as pain relief, independence, mobility, care of the skin, nutrition, deformity and self image, altered life style and disease management.

PAIN RELIEF

1. The patient should be given the opportunity to discuss pain and recognise factors and activities which increase their pain, and assist them in identifying those methods which alleviate their pain and discomfort.
2. The patient should be offered advice on the use of medication, and of side effects and the proposed benefits that may occur.
3. The patient should be offered advice on the relationship between rest, exercise, relaxation, and posture and their link to pain prevention and pain relief.
4. The patient should be offered advice or assisted to find relevant information relating to the use of alternative methods which prevent and relieve pain.

ACHIEVING OPTIMAL INDEPENDENCE AND MOBILITY

The main principal of care is to achieve maximum independence.

1. The patient should be offered help to recognise factors leading to reduced mobility and identify actions to minimise this.
2. The patient should be offered the opportunity to discuss the importance of good foot care and the benefits of wearing fitted footwear.
3. The patient should be offered help from the Rheumatology Team on the benefits of using mobility aids and of regular exercise regimes.
4. The patient should be given the opportunity to discuss ways of coping with the impact of reduced physical mobility and its effect on their lifestyle.

MAINTAINING CARE OF THE SKIN

1. The patient should be offered general advice on skin care and hygiene which includes how to prevent and reduce skin damage.
2. The patient should be helped to recognise areas of their skin which are prone to redness and skin damage and know where to seek help if problems arise.
3. The patient should be offered the opportunity to discuss the importance of a healthy diet and adequate fluid intake.
4. The patient should be offered advice on foot care and know who to contact for alternative arrangements.

ACHIEVING ADEQUATE NUTRITION

1. The patient should be given the opportunity to discuss ways of overcoming eating difficulties and the importance of maintaining an adequate diet.
2. The patient should be offered information on the use of special equipment for the preparation of foods.
3. The patient should be offered relevant information on community services eg. dietician or meals on wheels.

COPING WITH DEFORMITY AND CHANGES IN SELF IMAGE

1. The patient should be offered advice on achieving their acceptable level of well being in regard to their personal appearance.
2. The patient should be given the opportunity to discuss any fears and anxieties relating to his/her health care and disability.
3. The patient should be given the opportunity to discuss with the rheumatology team, any areas of treatment that lead him to feeling different from others.
4. The patient should be offered help to express any fears and anxieties relating to any feelings of inadequacy and low morale.

COPING WITH ALTERED LIFESTYLE

1. The patient should be given the opportunity to discuss changes in their lifestyle and home environment brought on by their Rheumatic Disease.
2. The patient should be offered help from the Rheumatology Team to identify strategies aimed at the reduction of any possible stress.
3. The patient should be given the opportunity to discuss any fears and anxieties relating to changes in self image and lifestyle due to the impact of how their Rheumatic Disease has affected them.
4. The patient should be offered support and advice relating to personal relationships and offered referral to any specialists/agencies as appropriate.

LEARNING TO MANAGE THE DISEASE

1. The patient should be given the opportunity to discuss the principles of how to protect their joints and benefits of exercise to maintain and enhance mobility.
2. The patient should be offered a list of health professionals/agencies to provide information and support in relation to the management of their Rheumatic Disease.
3. The patient should be given the opportunity to discuss the effects, side effects and types of drugs they are taking.
4. The patient should be offered support and advice relating to personal relationships. This may include referral to a specialist.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM YOUR RHEUMATOLOGY NURSING TEAM (SECTION B)

The service should be easily accessible providing a comprehensive range of advice, help and information to patients, families and health care professionals.

The provision of Rheumatology Nursing should be regarded as a partnership between the Practitioner and patient and as such requires joint understanding of each others expectations.

ACCESSIBILITY

1. The patient needs to be informed on how they can seek appropriate advice and where possible, be given a contact name and number.
2. The Rheumatology nurse should be able to liaise with all members of the health care team (ie. physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical staff, pharmacist, chiropody etc.) and refer the patient to the appropriate source.
3. Nursing clinics should be held in a comfortable and easily accessible area.
4. The Rheumatology nurse should have a working knowledge of local and national Voluntary Organisations and Social Services.

INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

1. A confidential service is offered at all time.
2. The Rheumatology nurse should offer a high standard of courtesy and advice at all times.
3. Patients privacy will be respected.
4. Suggestions from patients on how to improve the service will be welcomed.
5. Up to date information should be available from the Rheumatology nurse.
6. The Rheumatology nurse should have available information on local and national patient support groups.
7. All information given should be clear and easy to understand – the opportunity for individual discussion should be provided by the Rheumatology nurse.

COPING STRATEGIES

Aim

To assist all patients to cope effectively with their condition.

- All patients should be given the opportunity of a group or individual sessions on learning how to manage their condition.
- The Rheumatology nurse should offer advice on:
 - Joint Protection
 - Pain Management
 - Energy Conservation
 - Drug Therapy
 - Exercise and Rest

to empower the patient and enable a positive coping mechanism to develop.

- Advice and support should also be offered to family members to prevent isolation within relationships.

THE PATIENT – HOW YOU CAN HELP

Overall Objective

To work in partnership with the Rheumatology Nursing Team in order to enable a positive, effective way of living with your arthritis.

1. Information will be given to you regarding your condition, please read it, discuss it with family members and share your thoughts with the Rheumatology nurse – so that a shared comprehension and partnership develops.
2. It is important that you know what all your tablets are for; so that you can take them safely and at the times they will be most effective for you. You will need to be aware of possible side effects and whether any of your tablets require blood and urine monitoring.
3. You need to be advised on how to live with your condition so that you can cope effectively. Your Rheumatology nurse can help you with this.
4. Joining a local support group will enable you to meet other people, living and coping with similar problems. This can prove an invaluable source of advice and information.
5. We know that by enabling you to cope with your arthritis you will feel more in control of events and less anxious about tomorrow.

THE NURSE SPECIALIST ROLE IN RHEUMATOLOGY

This is an emerging and exciting role which has developed out of patient need. Due to the impact of the disease process and, often anxiety about the treatment that has been instigated by the multi-disciplinary team, patients need a point of contact when they feel ill, anxious or depressed.

The Rheumatology Nurse Specialist within the hospital and the community is seen to be the professional who co-ordinates and supports the patients, both in hospital and the community, by networking and linking with all the extended multi-disciplinary team.

KEY WORKING AREAS OF THE NURSE SPECIALIST IN RHEUMATOLOGY

1. To assess the Rheumatological problems of patients in the outpatient clinic and initiate investigations and treatment where appropriate.
2. The Nurse Specialist will work closely with all members of the multi-disciplinary health care team – referring patients to the appropriate discipline as their individual needs dictate.
3. The Nurse Specialist will often be involved in working closely with patients discharged from hospital to the community and equally will be the link with community staff when a rheumatology patient is admitted to hospital.
4. The Nurse Specialist will act as a resource for other members of the health care team, advising on appropriate care and conducting study days to increase awareness of the condition.
5. It is important that the Nurse Specialist takes the lead on the setting of standards of care for patients with rheumatic disease.
6. The Nurse Specialist will need to be accessible to both patients and other staff members.
7. The Nurse Specialist should be involved in co-ordinating the shared screening programme between hospital and community for all patients on immunosuppressive drug treatments.
8. The Nurse Specialist should develop patient education sessions within the hospital setting to empower patients with coping strategies.
9. The Nurse Specialist will work very closely with nurses in both the hospital and the community in helping to assess, plan and evaluate nursing care for patients suffering from rheumatic disease.

SUMMARY

This document is for all people with Arthritis, Health Professionals in the United Kingdom caring for patients suffering from Rheumatic Diseases, Trusts, Directly Managed Units, The Department of Health and the public at large, in order to improve knowledge and understanding of all the aspects of the Rheumatic Diseases.

- The RCN Rheumatology Nursing forum have created a Rheumatology Nursing Charter which states patients entitlements.
- Local Trust Charters can be drawn from this National Work in order to provide local standards for patients with Rheumatic Disease.
- The RCN Rheumatology Nursing Forum would welcome suggestions for additional Charter standards.
- The RCN Rheumatology Charter can be integrated into Audit policies and used as a way of measuring the quality of service.

Where to send your comments on the Rheumatology Nursing Charter

We would welcome your views on the Rheumatology Nursing Charter and any proposals for new standards. Please send your views on the Charter or proposals to:- Adviser in Nursing Practice, The Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1M 0AB.

WORKING PARTY FOR RHEUMATOLOGY CHARTER

Ms Jan Maycock

(Chairman of the Working Party)
Assistant Director of Service Development
The Institute of Nursing
at Leeds University
18 Blenheim Terrace
Leeds, LS2 9HA

Sister Janita Hayes

Nurse Practitioner
Trafford General Hospital
Moorside Road
Davyhulme
Manchester M31 5SL

Sister Eileen Spark

Clinical Nurse Specialist
Wirral Hospital Trust
Arrowe Park Hospital
Upton,
Wirral L49 5PE

Sister Anne Pendlebury

Wrightington Hospital
Wigan
Lancashire

Sister Sue Roberts

Orthopaedic Hospital
Oswestry
Shropshire

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