

HAVE SKILLS, WILL TRAVEL

Janet Rowley travelled from Australia to work as a neonatal nurse in the UK. Here, she talks about the rewards

Unusually perhaps, I bucked the migration trend and travelled from Australia to the UK to practise in my specialty of neonatal intensive care, continuing a long tradition of Australian nurses coming to work here. I am currently working as an agency nurse with the Health Professionals nursing agency in Knightsbridge, London, until I have a clear idea about my future.

I work in a high dependency unit linked to the intensive care unit and my day is consumed with the care of very sick babies. I constantly measure their physiological parameters, administer feed and medications, and interact with the medical teams. Communication with parents is paramount because they must be kept updated about their child's condition and treatment.

Broad perspective

My last role in Australia was senior clinical nurse in a regional hospital. On occasion, I acted up as the unit manager, which meant I could gain leadership and managerial skills. This gave me a broader perspective on the hospital's entire healthcare system.

Core specialty nursing skills include patience, empathy, compassion and an ability to act as the patient's or family's advocate, and to adopt a liaison role co-ordinating the many professional inputs. Neonatal nursing can be demanding and unpredictable – sometimes it can be instinct that alerts the nurse to subtle, yet vital, changes in the baby's condition.

Maintaining one's professional development can be a challenge, but neonatal care is so specialised that nurses must be constantly searching for new learning opportunities. It is imperative to remain up to date with the growing body of research that has a direct impact on the day-to-day nursing role.

Budgetary constraints on healthcare services mean that the onus is definitely on the individual nurse to maintain his or her professional development.

As a neonatal nurse I have been in some very stressful situations, but stress is best managed by not getting emotionally involved. My manner is warm and calm, yet detached. Emotions can be disabling and disorientating – I need to remain focused to deliver the best nursing care.



TIM GEORGE

Over time, I have become more familiar with the staff and their hospital procedures and I now feel part of a friendly team and value their experience and friendship.

Seeing a very sick, small, weak baby triumph with the aid of medical and nursing management and eventually go home is incredibly fulfilling. It is just as rewarding when parents return to the unit for a scheduled check-up with their beautiful, healthy child. They are so appreciative.

I would advise anyone wanting to work on the other side of the world or in another country to take up the challenge. I used the internet to search for neonatal jobs in the UK and the Health Professionals agency came across as the most informative and credible.

Whichever country you work in, you can make a difference. Nursing is a global skill for

which there is a global need. I feel privileged to be nursing wherever I am, and for now, working in the UK as a neonatal nurse is proving to be a great experience **NS**

Janet Rowley is a neonatal nurse working with the Health Professionals nursing agency and is based at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford

RESOURCES

- ▶ RCN children and young people forum <http://tinyurl.com/childrenforum>
- ▶ Neonatal Nurses Association www.nna.org.uk
- ▶ Health Professionals www.healthprofessionals.co.uk

