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Despite all odds, NHS staff are happy with their jobs

A survey by the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) has found that despite having to work overtime, and having to put up with violence and other stressful conditions at work, most NHS staff are happy with their jobs.

A total of 572 organisations took part in the survey, with 203 911 NHS employees responding to the study questionnaire.

Seventy five per cent of NHS staff reported working overtime, with 12% working more than 10 hours' overtime in an average week. Fifteen per cent reported having experienced violence at work from either patients or patients' relatives, and 37% reported having experienced some form of harassment—28% from patients or their relatives, 7% from supervisors, and 11% from colleagues. Twenty two per cent reported some form of work related injury or illness.

However, 73% of staff said they were generally satisfied with their jobs.

Chibuzo Odigwe *BMJ*

More information and a full text of the report can be obtained at www.chi.nhs.uk/surveys/nss2003/index.shtml

Trust's mental health services are threadbare, says CHI

Mental health services run by a Welsh NHS trust are threadbare and often cannot help patients with urgent needs, an investigation by the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) has concluded.

Staff shortages have led to heavy dependency on locums and bank staff, and there have been times when patients who needed to be detained or sectioned had been left in the community overnight.

The commission's investi-

French researchers join mass protest over continuing cuts in funding for scientific research

Some 15 000 research scientists gathered outside Paris City Hall on 9 March where a movement called Save Research organised a mass protest in which more than 2000 of the country's 3500 scientists who lead laboratory research teams handed in "resignation" letters in which they stated that they were boycotting their administrative duties.

Save Research is protesting against the government's axing of 550 permanent research jobs and increasing budgetary restrictions. The rally kicked off a week of protests by French public sector workers on poor levels of pay.

Two days after the lobby at City Hall, the scientists marched with about 2000 hospital workers protesting at a government plan to overhaul the public hospital system by 2007.

However, the boycott is largely symbolic, as the resignations are not likely to be accepted by the laboratory presidents, to whom the scientists report. But the group has also threatened a strike, and another day of demonstrations has been called for 19 March.

Brad Spurgeon *Paris*

gators also found evidence of nurses working 24 hour shifts (by being both permanent and bank nurses), signs of staff burnout, considerable levels of sickness absence, high staff turnover, and concerns about the level of supervision for professional staff.

The investigation was triggered during a routine review of acute and mental health services of Pembrokeshire and Derwen NHS Trust when a number of concerns were identified, including little evidence of action being taken after previous incidents.

The commission says that the trust failed to implement changes after internal and external reviews following two serious

incidents in 2001, including the death of a 20 year old woman after which the coroner recorded a verdict of suicide aggravated by neglect.

The report is available at www.chi.nhs.uk

Roger Dobson *Abergavenny*

Roma woman goes to UN claiming sterilisation without consent

A Roma woman who alleges she was sterilised without her consent during an emergency procedure at a Hungarian hospital is

taking her case to the United Nations.

Records show that the woman, then aged 28, who was undergoing labour pains and bleeding heavily, was taken by an emergency vehicle to Szatmár-Beregi Hospital in Fehérgyarmat in northeastern Hungary on 2 January 2001.

Examinations determined that the placenta had ruptured and that her unborn infant had died, said Dr András Kanyó, a gynaecologist, anaesthesiologist, and intensive care specialist who treated the woman.

Dr Kanyó said that the woman told him that she did not want any more children. After she had signed a consent form describing the procedure, Dr Kanyó performed a caesarean section to remove the dead infant and tied off the woman's fallopian tubes.

The woman has since contended that she did not understand the consent form and that parts of it were illegible. She has failed to win any compensation in the Hungarian courts. Now, with the help of the European Roma Rights Centre and the Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities, she is taking her case to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, charging the Hungarian government with violating the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Carl Kovac and Ágota Hajnal

Budapest

Infectious diseases expert sentenced to prison and fined

Dr Thomas Butler, an expert on plague who was convicted on 47 of 69 charges involving missing phials of plague bacteria, was sentenced last week in Texas to two years in federal prison. He was fined \$15 000 (£8300; €12 200) and must pay restitution of \$38 675 to Texas Tech University in Lubbock, where he was formerly professor of medicine and head of the infectious diseases division.

The case began in January 2003, when Dr Butler told his