Gastrointestinal Nursing Awards

Rewarding innovation, leadership and clinical excellence

GI Nurse of the Year is a prestigious award, recognising a nurse who has made outstanding achievements in GI services, patient care and multidisciplinary team working and demonstrated innovative thinking in the art and science of GI care.

Marian O’Connor is a lead specialist nurse in inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) at St Mark’s Hospital. Her team provides educational outpatient clinics, a dedicated day unit for treatments, and a patient advice line that receives 3000 calls a year. In the last 12–18 months, Marian has implemented several changes, drastically improving the services she and her team provide.

‘Dealing with patients is my favourite part,’ says Marian. ‘They should be able to fulfil their dreams and ambitions while living with the disease—making sure we offer them the services they need to do that is what inspires me.’

Marian has developed an IBD Patient Panel, providing a meaningful voice and structured forum for patients; an intranet page with consistent patient information and protocols for multidisciplinary team members across three hospital sites; and together with the pharmacy department, a patient handheld record, ensuring patient safety and ease of access to patients’ blood test results. In November, Marian also set up a successful IBD open day for patients, which will now become an annual event.

‘There are always challenges in an ever-changing NHS and changes take months to implement,’ says Marian. ‘But I’m always determined to follow through to the end, and you don’t have to reinvent the wheel.’

Between her early morning runs, days at clinic, and dinner dates with her husband James, Marian has found time to co-edit Inflammatory Bowel Disease Nursing, the first book of its kind, and she plays a key role in developing university IBD nursing modules.

Marian chairs N-ECCO (Nurses of the European Crohn’s and Colitis Organisation), helping to organise an annual congress for about 250 IBD nurses throughout Europe, and she even runs marathons to raise money for IBD. This coming year, Marian plans to use her annual leave to participate in World IBD Day on 15 May in Brussels and to volunteer at EFCCA’s (European Federation of Crohn’s and Colitis associations) Catch your dream summer camp for young people. It’s no wonder Marian fought off some very fierce competition to become this year’s GI Nurse of the Year.

By Aysha Pabani