

## **Mental Health Nursing and Learning Disability Nursing Records**

Although these are now recognised as two distinct nursing specialisms, in records up until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century there is considerable overlap between learning disability and mental health nursing. Frequently there was little differentiation in the treatment of patients with learning disabilities and those with mental health issues.

It's worth bearing in mind that terminology around mental health and learning disability has changed considerably over the years. Terms used by medical professionals that are now considered offensive, derogatory and outdated will have been in common use in the past and appear in original records. Archive catalogues are created to enable searching for outdated as well as current terms. For example, you may need to search using terms such as 'asylum' rather than 'hospital'.

The main sources related to mental health and learning disability nursing held by the Royal College of Nursing Archives are the following:

### **Oral history interview recordings**

These are interviews recorded with nurses about their experiences which include the treatment of patients in various settings around the UK. There are several interviews with nurses working in the fields of mental health and learning disability nursing. The overall collection reference is 'T', browse by searching T\*. You can find these by searching our online catalogue using keywords (i.e. using medical terms for illnesses, specific drugs or forms of treatments or the names of places or hospitals). Some of the interviews in this collection are closed due to data protection. In this instance we endeavour to enable access to redacted versions of recordings and transcripts.

### **Personal collections**

These are collections of personal records donated by individual nurses or their families. They contain historical items such as examination papers, professional qualifications, memoirs, correspondence and badges related to mental health and learning disability nursing. The overall reference number for the personal papers collection is 'C', browse by searching C\*. You can search using any part of the name of a nurse if known (e.g. Annie Altschul) or by using other keywords such as placenames, health conditions or names of treatments. There are also mental health nursing badges from societies such as the Royal Medico-psychological association and individual hospitals which can be found using the society or hospital name.

### **Corporate Records**

Royal College of Nursing corporate records are accessible after 20 years unless they are also covered by data protection laws.

The records of the Royal College of Nursing Forums and Societies (RCN15 and RCN40) are one of the main sources related to mental health and learning disability nursing. The records of the RCN Society of Mental Health Nursing are contained within collection reference number RCN15/12. Other Forum newsletters (RCN40) include the following:

Learning Disability (Nursing) Newsletter

Learning Disability (Nursing) Membership Groups Newsletter

Link Up (Learning Disability Forum newsletter)

FOCUS & ACE News, Forum for Nurses Working in a Controlled Environment Newsletter

Mental Health Bulletin

Mental Health (Nursing) Newsletter

Newsletter of the RCN Mental Health & Allied Topics Membership Groups

Nursing and Older People Nursing Newsletter

Nursing Minds

Society of Mental Handicap Nursing Newsletter

Society of Psychiatric Nursing Newsletter

The records of the General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN5) contain information about the College's involvement in the legislation behind mental health and nursing in the UK. RCN responses to external consultations can be found in RCN5/8.

The minutes of the annual RCN Congress meeting (RCN25B) contain discussions by members of the Royal College of Nursing on various issues facing nurses. Each annual catalogue entry contains a list of 'resolutions' and 'matters for discussion' for that Congress meeting, including some on mental health. The programme and recordings of each Congress are available to members of the RCN exclusively online at <https://rcn-saml.access.preservica.com/> (RCN member login is required).

### **Historic Nursing Journals**

The Nursing Record (later the British Journal of Nursing) from 1888-1956 is available to browse or search online here: <https://rcnarchive.rcn.org.uk/>. It's possible to search by keywords or to browse by dates.

### **Records of Male Nurses**

The RCN archive holds the records of some nursing organisations that no longer exist. Two of these collections contain information about mental health nursing practice due to the historical predominance of male nurses in this nursing specialism.

National Association of Male Nurses 1951-1975 (AMN).

Society of Registered Male Nurses (RCN26/5).

There is also a personal papers collection containing records of the Society of Registered Male Nurses, Thomas Hugh Jones (C740).

### **Nursing Journals**

Among the RCN library collection of historic nursing journals are copies of the Journal of Psychiatric Nursing and Mental Health Services (1963-1984),

Perspectives in Psychiatric Care (1976-1985) and Psychiatric Nursing (1982-1986).

### **General Nursing Council Syllabi**

The RCN library holds examples of the UK training course syllabi for mental nursing as published by the state registration body of the time, the General Nursing Councils (England & Wales and Scotland. Northern Ireland had a separate committee). These contain details of what topics were covered in mental health nurse training courses.