The future landscape of the nursing profession

Professor B Gail Thomas
Bournemouth University

- All pre registration nursing programmes to be at degree level by 2013 (therefore all nurses completing from 2016 will be graduates)
- What does that mean right now and during the intervening years, for new entrants to the profession?

Is all calm??

Current situation:

- 25% of nursing students already commissioned on degree programmes in England (one SHA has 75% graduates exiting from one HEI due to 3rd year transfers)
- A good proportion of the remainder exit with an ‘advanced diploma’ (only 60 credits short of a degree)
- The rest get a ‘diploma in higher’ education (2/3 of the credit needed for a degree)
- Therefore evolution not revolution

So are we flying high?

Positive aspects

- Student recruitment (highest number of applications for any subject in HE in the UK this year)
– Flexible career pathways
– Job satisfaction (helping people)
– Stimulating role
– Opportunities for diversity, responsibility and development

What are the down sides?

- Public perception
- Staffing levels
- Pressure/ targets
- Stress
- Morale
- Uncertainty about employment in the future

Winds of change

So will moving to graduate status change the landscape for nurses?

- Key differences of degree exit =
  - Critical thinker
  - Autonomy/ lead professional
  - Evidence based practice
  - Meeting individual patient/ client needs (i.e. analysing, interpreting, adapting)

Shrouded in mist?

Will a degree meet those expectations?

- 50% of the programme is and will remain in practice
- In order for the ‘new’ nurse to function differently, they need to be learning in a different practice environment
- Role models of leadership
- Primary care settings
- Treated differently by colleagues and service users

There are challenges ahead!