

Colchester nurse through to final of national awards

A specialist nurse based at Colchester General Hospital has been shortlisted in the final five of a national nursing awards competition.

Joy Mason, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), has been chosen from more than 450 nominations from patients in the Crohn's and Colitis UK IBD Nursing Awards for 2011/12.

Crohn's and Colitis UK invited their 31,000 members living with IBD to nominate their specialist nurse for the award.

The most common forms of IBD are Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis – the latter being the condition that Manchester United and Scotland footballer Darren Fletcher was announced as having last month.

In 2009 Sister Mason became the first IBD nurse specialist at Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust.

"I was really surprised, but honoured, to be shortlisted for this award," she said.

"I hope it will help to increase public awareness of inflammatory bowel disease which affects about 250,000 people in the UK.

"The number of people being diagnosed continues to grow, and we now have about 1,000 cases on our books at Colchester Hospital Trust."

The winners of the Crohn's and Colitis UK IBD Nursing Awards will be announced at a ceremony in London on 1 March.

The prizes are educational bursaries, which can be used for professional development, with the winner's bursary worth £1,000.

Sister Mason has her own clinics, including a fortnightly clinic at Clacton Hospital, sees inpatients on the wards and also runs a helpline, which she set up.

The IBD Helpline, which patients can call for advice or to arrange urgent appointments during a flare-up, receives 250-300 calls a month.

In addition, she supports the North Essex Group of Crohn's and Colitis UK, some of whose members nominated her.

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Her patients said:

"I can't speak highly enough of Joy's hard work, support and dedication to our group and her patients in the North Essex area"

"She actually listens to what you are saying and finds the best solution to help alleviate the pain and other issues"

"With Sister Joy Mason you feel that she is there with you, and for you, and that with her dedication and professionalism there is life with Crohn's. And that you are not on your own"

"My nurse is not a drain on the NHS, in fact she is a great asset to the NHS and her advice and guidance can reduce the risk of going in to hospital, therefore making a great contribution to NHS cost savings"

Before taking up her current post, Sister Mason worked for more than eight years on Wivenhoe Ward, a surgical ward, at Colchester General Hospital.

Richard Driscoll, Chief Executive of Crohn's and Colitis UK, said: "We had over 450 nominations from patients explaining just how essential their specialist nurse is to their well-being and their ability to lead a productive life at school, college, home and work.

"Many patients explained how access to their nurse by telephone or email at critical times had helped them manage their condition at home without interruption to their daily activities and avoiding clinic appointments or admissions."

The judging panel consisted of Stuart Berliner, Trustee of Crohn's and Colitis UK and an IBD patient himself; Jeanette Thompson, Chair of the charity's Specialist Nursing Group at the Royal College of Nursing; Professor Susan McClaren, professor of nursing at London South Bank University; and Sophie Gardner, editor of Gastrointestinal Magazine.

IBD is a chronic (ongoing) condition. There is currently no cure for either Crohn's disease or colitis (except for ulcerative colitis if the colon is surgically removed) but treatment can control the diseases in most cases.

IBD should not be confused with IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) which is a completely separate condition, but which shares some symptoms with IBD.

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