



# RCN Connect – promoting diversity

## What is RCN Connect?

RCN Connect was formed in 2000 by the Royal College of Nursing. It offers a programme of activity centred on cultural and ethnic diversity for increasing black and ethnic minority membership and raising levels of participation inside the RCN.

The programme develops networks and networking tools for encouraging understanding and challenging the barriers black and ethnic minority groups face in the workplace. One element has been training for members on confidence-building, interview skills and participation in public and political events.

RCN Connect tailors its programme to meet the individual aspirations of black and ethnic minority RCN members, working to utilise existing organisations and networks to realise the potential of ethnic and cultural diversity in all aspects of the RCN's work. Up to now, some objectives have been:

- ◆ To improve levels of recruitment to the RCN among black and ethnic minority nurses and health care assistants;
- ◆ To build relationships and raise awareness of the nursing profession

within black and ethnic minority communities through outreach work;

- ◆ To increase the number of black and ethnic minority activists and the scale of their involvement in RCN activities, including attending and addressing the RCN's annual Congress;
- ◆ To develop social partnership links with voluntary, community and cultural organisations and events for instance the Ram Katha Vedic Festival (Hindu and Sikh), Black History Month and Mary Seacole Awareness Week.

RCN Connect was launched as a pilot scheme in the West Midlands. The initial programme of ten events included focus meetings, seminars and a conference, involving around 200 nurses. Central to the strategy was engagement with the broader community and the voluntary sector. RCN Connect was also used as a way to support member-led groups such as EDNA (Ethnically Diverse NHS Association).

The programme has now been rolled out to all RCN regions in England and Wales. An introductory workshop is planned for Scotland later in 2002.

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