Report on attending BACCN 37th Annual Conference & 1st Joint BACCN/IACCN Conference Belfast October 2022

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Despite having been a member of BACCN for the last 15+years and part of the Yorkshire & Lincolnshire Regional committee for over 10 years, I still felt a sense of excitement at attending this year’s conference in Belfast. Partly as this was the 1st joint BACCN/IACCN conference but mainly because, after 2 years of virtual conference, we could all finally be together face to face.

The trip to Belfast was eventful to say the least. I was booked on the Sunday evening flight from Leeds Bradford as I was off to see one of my main passions– Leeds United – in the afternoon. I had everything planned including the best place to park near Elland Road to ensure we could make a quick get away at the final whistle. What I hadn’t planned for was a power cut a minute in to the game and a delay of 40 minutes. Didn’t they know I had a tight deadline to make!!

Despite the delays I was still through security with 90 mins to spare. Just time to meet up in the bar with another Yorks & Lincs committee member and some of her colleagues from Leeds.

Fats forward to arriving in Belfast – after a very hairy landing – and it was a quick freshen up before meeting with Yorks & Lincs chair and secretary in the hotel bar.

On to day 1 of the conference.

A lot of conferences and study events seemed to be focusing on COVID 19 but thankfully BACCN choose not to go down this route. Instead the theme was Critical Care Across the World: Breaking Down Barriers. Basically the ability for nurses to achieve innovation and excellence in critical care nursing, wherever that may be and whether or not it involved humans or animals.

The conference opened with the 1st of 5 key note speakers –Christine Sheehan, who spoke about her thoughts for the future of critical care and how we need to be planning for the future. Interestingly she also discussed how it is normal for critical care to have a turnover of experienced staff, something that I explain to my colleagues all the time. But what we need for critical care staffing to be sustainable is succession planning for this.

I was pleasantly surprised by the 2nd key note speaker, Helen Ballantyne. I’m not an animal person but Helen ‘s talk about her experiences of veterinary and adult critical care nursing was interesting and the concept of ‘One Health’ is sometime I plan to explore more.

Over lunch it was good to catch up with some of the regional committee members to find out what everyone is up to and make plans with the regional advisors for the forthcoming year.

The rest of the day was spent attending various sessions including a simulation workshop on capnography, running a podcast to enhance learning experiences in ICU and a workshop run by Leeds teaching hospitals on creating meaningful inclusion in a successful diverse workforce.

In my role as critical care lead nurse for education, I am always on the lookout for new ideas to aid staff development and as we are in the process of setting up a SIM training programme plenty of notes were made during the capnography session. As a unit who has employed over 30 international nurses in the last 18 months the meaningful inclusion workshop information will prove valuable.

End of day one and time for us all to let our hair down. First stop regional committee members social. Good to see old friends in person and to meet new ones – all whilst taking part in one of Ian’s ‘famous’ quizzes! Then on to conference dinner and an evening of dancing. I’m always amazed how the organisers find such fab bands.

Day 2 and it started with the 4th of the keynote speakers, Rachel Kenna who is the CNO in Ireland.

As she had been in London the day she provided a glimmer of hope that the Department of Health are listening to the key concerns within nursing and hopefully are willing to address some of these. I have been a critical care nurse for 26 years and I can’t remember a time when morale and staffing levels were so low.

Day 2 also brought about another simulation session for me – this time on bleeding from a tracheostomy which was run by the same team as the previous day. As part of my Trust’s tracheostomy MDT, the workshop helped provide reassurance about the contents of the course we run, whilst also giving me some food for thought.

Throughout the conference there was plenty of opportunity to view the poster presentations – situating them within the exhibition centre was a winner for me as you could pop and view them at any time, especially useful when the poster session I wanted to go to clashed with something else I wanted to go to!

Due to flight times I unfortunately had to miss the last few sessions of conference. I did think about staying another night but work and uni demands meant this wasn’t possible.

Once again, the BACCN conference has given me food for thought and inspired me to make some improvements in my unit.

Thank you BACCN for providing me with a grant to attend this year’s conference. In all the years I have been a member I had never thought about applying – despite numerous emails encouraging members to apply!! If you are reading this and thinking about attending a future conference but unsure if you can afford it get that application in!!!

See you all in Nottingham ☺