

Report on attending BACCN 37th Annual Conference & 1st Joint BACCN/IACCN Conference by Susie Chrystal

It was with some trepidation that I left Newcastle/Gateshead to attend the BACCN conference in Belfast. Attending a conference alone is something I haven't done before and although I was looking forward to the time away I don't generally enjoy being by myself.

However, my first stop after getting the bus from the airport was to meet an old friend who lives in Belfast on the Sunday afternoon and then have a relaxing evening so things started quite well. When I arrived at the ICC on Monday morning I was met by a really friendly lady on the welcome desk who encouraged me to enjoy the time out from my normal working life, appreciating the difficulties of the last three years.

The first keynote speech from Christine Sheehan was an inspirational review of the past and a look to the future. It was really refreshing to hear her say that the loss of experienced nurses from Critical Care is normal and to be expected but the succession planning needs to be in place. I plan to look at the training from WHO about healthy work environments which Christine spoke about as this is something I am interested in. Next, we heard from Helen Ballantyne about her experiences of veterinary and critical care nursing. This was very interesting, as an animal lover I was almost convinced to swap specialties. I appreciated her mention of 'nurse translation' being the role of nurses to translate what is said to owners, relatives or patients to what it actually means. I hope that there is more sharing between these specialties in the future.

For the rest of day one I attended a variety of talks on weaning, social justice, electrical impedance tomography, staff wellbeing, humanisation of ICU, an app to aid training of nurses in Zambia and the closing keynote from Jos Latour on one of my favourite subjects family and friends involvement in ICU. Jos had some useful advice; keep people integrated, keep people involved and keep people inspired. I hope to implement this advice into my working life to improve the care for patients in our Critical Care Department.

I enjoyed the conference dinner and dancing. Having recently bought two of the new Sydney Go Flat chairs from Seating Matters they were happy to host me so I wasn't on my own for the evening. I have never seen a dancefloor fill so quickly, there was an obvious need for everyone to let off some steam!

Day two we were joined by Rachel Kenna, the chief nursing officer for Ireland who inspired us further about how to navigate the future of Critical Care Nursing amidst pressure and challenges. I then attended a session by Seating Matters on the importance of seating in Critical Care and the difference that makes to patients both physically and psychologically, a subject I am also passionate about. For the rest of the day I attended talks on PNAs, embedding Psychologists in Critical Care and integrating Lebanese Nurses into Critical Care. In this last talk I heard of an organisation called 'Talent Beyond Boundaries' which seeks to find employment for displaced people around the world – this was both moving and challenging.

The variety of talks over the two days was impressive. I always find it encouraging to attend a conference and hear from others who are enthusiastic about similar things to myself. As a Critical Care Rehabilitation Specialist Nurse leading a small team, driving change and improvement in Critical Care and improving the journey for patients as they face recovery in hospital and at home sometimes it feels like an uphill struggle so it is good to join with others who have a similar vision.

My fears about being alone for a conference were unfounded as I made a friend on the first day who was lovely to reflect with on different talks with and share our experiences. My travel arrangements were very easy, and I definitely enjoyed the whole experience. Many thanks to BACCN for the financial support to make this possible.