

Name _____ Date _____

Matron gives modern NHS a check-up

From BBC News 01.07.08 © BBC MMVIII

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/health/7477420.stm>

There's something about Matron. Perhaps it is the iconic image of Hattie Jacques from the "Carry On" films. Something powerful, domineering and above all large.

As hospital infections have **spiralled** in the NHS the call has gone out: "Bring back Matron". So that is what we did. At 83 Hazel Halter has lost none of her **authority**.

We went to Addenbrookes hospital in Cambridge where Hazel was Matron in the 1970's. Although she doesn't have the physical presence of Hattie Jacques she **admits** she can still strike the fear of God into hospital staff.

"I think you had to be a bit **scary**," she said. "I think it is like when you're at home you have to be a little bit frightened of your parents. I think they looked up to you in those days as a figure of authority - but I think they also saw you as a **sort** of mother figure of the hospital."

Critical eye

Matron has come back to cast a critical eye over the NHS. She will see whether the much vaunted fight back against the super bugs adds up to much.

First stop: the sink.

"Why are you using that **particular** soap?" Matron asks an unsuspecting nurse.

"It's the one recommended by the Trust for infection control," comes the answer.

"And the other one?"

"That's for general hand washing."

All very different from Matron's time.

"In our day we had a block of carbolic soap and a scrubbing brush. We scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed our nails and our hands until they were almost raw."

Today in hospitals there's a **combination** of soap and alcohol gel.

"I thought it was confusing" says Hazel.

"I saw several people walk by and not use it. I saw other people using it quite a lot and I don't think people understand when they're supposed to use it and when they're not supposed to use it."

Disapproving of uniforms

It's not the only thing Matron isn't **sure** about. She thinks visiting hours are too long and she is unhappy about uniforms. Nurses used to have starched collars, aprons and hair pinned up.

Name _____ Date _____

Matron gives modern NHS a check-up

"I don't like the modern uniforms they all seem very tight."

But that is not Hazel's main **concern**.

"They told me that they took them home to wash," she said. "I'm not happy about that. Some will be very conscientious, others won't be bothering."

When Hazel first trained in 1946 nurses did most of the cleaning.

Cleaning rot

Hospital infections were **rare** and, of course, MRSA didn't exist - the bug had not developed a resistance to antibiotics by then. Today most cleaning in hospitals is contracted out to private companies. Hazel does not blame individual cleaners, but says when nurses stopped cleaning the rot set in.

"They'd got very **slack** and I think it's a reflection of society as a whole that people don't pay the same sort of attention to things today like hygiene."

At Addenbrookes - and across the NHS - rates of MRSA and Clostridium Difficile have started to **fall**. The government has made hygiene a priority. There have been a number of high profile initiatives like deep cleans and the screening of patients. Dr Nick Brown, consultant medical microbiologist at Addenbrookes, says the culture has changed.

"In the not too distant past there was an **acceptance** that infections were **inevitable** and there wasn't much that we could do about them.

"I think that attitude has changed and the results recently have shown that that is the case."

In the NHS in England today there are 5,000 so-called modern matrons.

They are **responsible** for a smaller number of wards than the old style matron but they still have control over all nursing and cleaning staff on those wards. So should we bring back the old style Matron? Would it make any difference? Hazel isn't sure.

"I don't think you can bring back Matron in the way it was in my day. But I think **personally** seeing those girls this morning I thought they were doing a very good job."

The reality is hospitals today are **probably** too big for one person to look after. The days of Matron have gone.

From BBC News 01.07.08 © BBC MMVIII
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/health/7477420.stm>

Name _____ Date _____

Matron gives modern NHS a check-up

A. Read the article on page 1

Now answer the following questions. Circle the correct answer.

1. Hattie was matron at Addenbrookes in the 1970s.
True / False
2. In hospitals today more than one type of handwash is used.
True / False
3. Hazel blames poor cleaning standards on the individual cleaners.
True / False
4. Dr Nick Brown thinks infections are inevitable.
True / False
5. Hazel first trained in the 1970s.
True / False
6. Modern matrons have no control over cleaning staff.
True / False

B. What are your views? Is the NHS in a mess? Does it need sorting out? Should we bring back matron? Or, do you think that the NHS is fine?

Write an essay giving your views on the current state of the NHS.

Name _____ Date _____

Matron gives modern NHS a check-up

C.

Look at the words in the text that are in **bold**. They are listed on the left below. Can you match them with a word on the right that can replace them in the text.

For example **authority** can be replaced by influence

authority	→	influence
spiralled		frightening
admits		sloppy
scary		mixture
sort		decline
particular		uncommon
combination		acknowledges
sure		type
concern		worry
rare		escalated
slack		certain
fall		specific

Name _____ Date _____

Matron gives modern NHS a check-up

D. The words in **blue** are misspelled. Circle the correct spelling.

1. What is the correct spelling of **acceptance**?

- a. acceptence
- b. acceptance
- c. aceptence
- d. acceptanse

2. What is the correct spelling of **inevitable**?

- a. inevitable
- b. inevittable
- c. inevetable
- d. inevytable

3. What is the correct spelling of **responsible**?

- a. responsible
- b. responseble
- c. risponsible
- d. responsible

4. What is the correct spelling of **personally**?

- a. personnelly
- b. personaly
- c. personally
- d. personely

5. What is the correct spelling of **probably**?

- a. probabley
- b. probably
- c. proberbly
- d. probebley

Matron gives modern NHS a check-up

Answers

ANSWERS

A.

1. False – her name is Hazel
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. False in 1946
6. False

C.

authority	→	influence
spiralled		escalated
admits		acknowledges
scary		frightening
sort		type
particular		specific
combination		mixture
sure		certain
concern		worry
rare		uncommon
slack		slack
fall		decline

- D.
1. acceptance
 2. inevitable
 3. responsible
 4. personally
 5. probably