Involvement may vary but nurses have a vital role to play in hospital ward rounds

simply involves letting them know the round will be taking place;
» Encouraging patients to think about any questions they may have, which may help to avoid their forgetting what is important to them;
» Chasing up any multidisciplinary perspectives of care to discuss on the ward round.

Critical attributes (during)
This refers to the key activities, and perhaps type of structure, that is integral to a ward round:
» Review of unstable or deteriorating patients;
» Decision making and documenting of care;
» Review of patients going home (pre-discharge);
» Review of patients’ progress during their inpatient stay.

Consequences (after)
Once the ward round is over, a number of activities will be necessary:
» Team organisation;
» Progression of tasks;
» Communications;
» Repetition of information to the patient;
» Motivation of the ward team.

Nurses’ role in ward rounds
There should be no debate about whether or not nurses should be involved in ward rounds. The only debate, perhaps, is how to reinvigorate the nurse’s role among what are often regarded as competing priorities such as medicine rounds, theatre lists, observations – particularly if these are due to take place at the same time as the ward round. However, the presence and participation of registered nurses increases their commitment to patient-centred care.

Nurses’ workload has increased over recent years, and patients in hospital beds are more acutely ill; as such, ward rounds must be taken into account alongside numerous other skilled interventions when staffing levels and patient dependency are being reconsidered in relation to budget setting.

The key aspects of the nurse’s role on ward rounds can be defined using the acronym ACTION:
» Advocate;
» Chaperone;
» Transitions;
» Informative;
» Organiser;
» Nurse-centred.

Advocate
As members of the ward team attending the round, nurses need to know their patients. “Knowing” arises from taking a nursing handover and looking after a group of patients, so handovers and ward rounds are inextricably linked if nurses are to successfully represent those patients in their care (Jugessur and Iles, 2009). In the context of ward rounds, being an advocate involves:
» Adequately preparing for the ward round (safeguarding patients’ interests);
» Empowering patients to ask questions on the ward round (being included);
» Communicating with the multidisciplinary team after a ward round.

Chaperone
As with any other examination or intervention, protecting patients’ dignity and privacy is a priority for nurses during ward rounds (Lambert, 2010). If this role is delegated to another team member, that person should be aware of what chaperoning involves, which is as follows:
» Preparing the patient for examination through communication and positioning;
» Taking responsibility for dignity and privacy;
» Minimising any anxiety and potential embarrassment;
» Respecting cultural wishes throughout the process.

Transitions
The need to minimise the length of inpatient stays means there has never been greater emphasis on patient progress along the care pathway. Multiple handovers during transitions between wards or between acute, intermediate and community care can lead to care being fragmented. The continuity and safe transition of information between care

FRANCIS ON...
WARD RoundS

● Ward rounds are an opportunity for the multidisciplinary team to review a patient’s condition and develop a coordinated plan of care, while engaging patients and/or their carers in making shared decisions about care
● Ward rounds should be seen as a priority by all team members
● A senior nurse should be present at every bedside patient review as part of a ward round, and the senior nursing team should be informed of all key decisions made on the ward round
● No consultant ward round or visit should take place without the presence of the nurse, or an appointed deputy or other replacement, in charge of the patients to be visited
● As well as improving communication and the flow of information between medical staff, nurses’ involvement in ward rounds is an important learning tool
● Senior nurses should ask student nurses to present bedside updates. This ensures students nurse are fully informed about their patients, and gives them experience while providing the senior nurse with an understanding of the student nurse’s abilities