



21st July 2006 NACC scooped the 'Premier Award for the Patient Association of the Year' at this month's awards ceremony for the healthcare PR and medical education industry, which was hosted by DJ and TV presenter Johnny Vaughan at the Grosvenor Hotel, London.

The major initiative launched in 2005 by the members and staff of NACC (the National Association for Colitis & Crohn's Disease) to campaign for more IBD specialist nurses in hospitals has been officially recognised with the charity's first ever category win in the prestigious Communiqué Awards.

'NACC calls for more Colitis & Crohn's nurses' was regarded as a powerful integrated media campaign that resulted in widespread publicity with a staggering 57.3 million 'opportunities to view' since its launch 12 months ago.

More than 30 in-depth features were published about the challenges of living with Colitis and Crohn's disease and the benefits of having access to a specialist nurse. A Breakfast TV slot with Natasha Kaplinski interviewing Fame Academy's Carrie Grant, who has Crohn's, was considered as a major coup.

More than 430 NACC members wrote to their MPs and 370 members were identified as media contacts. In addition, over 14,300 patients, families, friends and healthcare professionals have added their names to a NACC petition calling for more specialist nurses.

Whilst NACC was overjoyed at its award and having raised awareness of the need for specialist nurses among the general public, Richard Driscoll, Director of NACC, expressed disappointment at the increasingly uphill struggle within the NHS as Trusts move to manage deficits by selecting specialist nurses as a group of healthcare professionals that could be axed to save money.

"It feels like the NHS care for patients with long-term illnesses is moving backwards," he said. "We are finding many specialist nurses, including IBD specialist nurses, whose jobs are threatened. Some have already been told they will be made redundant or redeployed. In some cases this is because Hospital Trusts are reducing deficits, but many are expressing concern about the level of

income they will receive through the new NHS funding systems - Payment by Results and Practice-based Commissioning.”

“Cutting these specialist posts completely undermines the ability of Gastroenterology Departments to provide the accessible and experienced front-line support which enables patients to manage their Colitis or Crohn’s Disease and minimise its impact on their working and family lives. These nurses also play an important role in monitoring the safe use of the immunomodulator drugs that many patients now receive.”

NACC explained that specialist nurses provided a vital first point of contact. ‘Helplines’ provided by nurses often turn into ‘lifelines’, particularly when patients suffer a flare up, such as acute, painful diarrhoea requiring repeated toilet visits. With travelling to hospital virtually impossible, nurses offer immediate, highly qualified advice and help prioritise out-patient appointments or hospital admissions.

The NACC campaign, which is supported by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Gastroenterology and Stoma Care Forum, was heralded in the awards as having ‘great integrated focus’ and ‘excellent coverage across a wide range of media’.

NACC acknowledged the commitment and professionalism of Healthcare Solutions, its media agency, who planned and implemented the campaign.

The 24 category Communiqué award winners were selected over two days by a panel of 34 senior communicators from both agency and client companies.

As the awards evening got underway, Mark Savage, the Managing Director and publisher of Communiqué and Pharmaceutical Marketing, announced to more than a 1,000 industry and service sector professionals that: “It is the sheer quality of the competition that continually raises the standard by which the winners are chosen.”

Health professionals, patients or their families seeking further information or support can contact:

**National Association for Colitis and Crohn’s Disease (NACC)
4 Beaumont House, Sutton Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 5HH**

**Daytime Information Line 0845 130 2233 & NACC-in-Contact Line 0845 130 3344
Website www.nacc.org.uk**

Editor’s Notes

NACC provides a valuable support network and information resource for people and families affected by Colitis and Crohn’s Disease as well as raising significant funds for research. The 70 NACC Groups across the UK enable members to share information

and experiences. The Daytime Information Line is available to members and non-members alike who have queries about all aspects of their disease. The NACC-in-Contact Line offers members a chance to speak to a trained volunteer with Colitis or Crohn's Disease. Membership of NACC is open to anyone who has Colitis or Crohn's Disease, their friends and families, health professionals and anyone who wishes to support the charity. Membership costs £12 in the first year, £10 thereafter.

NACC – Improving Life for People Affected by Colitis and Crohn's Disease