**Project title:** Understanding Nursing Work

**Keywords:** workforce, National Health Service, nurses

**Brief Description**
Nursing work in the UK has come under intense scrutiny for failures of care. There are competing explanations for this from the public and politicians, as well as from within the profession. Some have represented the problem as a ‘compassion deficit’ of individual nurses while others have looked more to organizational or workload issues for explanation. Particular concerns have been raised in care of the elderly across both community and acute sectors. There have been some explanations which focus on the internal and external stressors of working in these areas where there are high numbers of unregistered staff.

While there is a recent trend to study the effect of workload and skill mix, as well as nurse to patient ratios, much of this work is at a macro level, although there are one or two seminal pieces of work now somewhat dated. There is scope for research that examines the workplace in detail over a period of time in order to observe the details of interaction between nurses and patients in more general areas as well as care of the elderly and between different members of staff (including registered, unregistered and different professional groups) to develop an understanding of the forces and events that influence patient care. This research could present authoritative accounts of nursing work in the NHS to potentially influence future decisions about work and the workplace.

Middlesex University has links with NHS trusts, both acute and mental health in North, Central and East London.

**References**
Aiken, L et al. (2012) Patient safety, satisfaction, and quality of hospital care: cross sectional surveys of nurses and patients in 12 countries in Europe and the United States BMJ 2012; 344 doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.e1717](http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.e1717) (Published 20 March 2012) BMJ 2012;344:e1717


