

# Nursing and Social Sciences

Miss J.D. POWAR

**H**EALTH is the birthright of each born alive individual. The concept of health as a basic right in social justice, is a state of well being which individuals and the communities have the potential to attain by their own efforts and selectively supported by organised health services.

From time immemorial nurses and dais have been playing an important role in the community as midwives and dais, though not in an organised form before the inception of the idea, 'Primary Health Care'. Primary health care in a simplest form will mean the care or the advice provided by the person of first contact. The Bhore Committee Report 1946 had suggested an organised health services and the community development programme was launched in 1952. The nursing profession even after Independence did not wean away from the British pattern of nursing education and service. Unfortunately, our heritage of nursing education in India has been—

"More academic than pragmatic.

More global or international than national,

More hospital than community oriented,

More episodic than total management,

More individual than a group concern,"

with the result the nursing professionals could not take dogmatic attitude to decide educational change to suit the national health needs. In fact, nursing professionals have been in close contact with the patients and the community.

## Nurse and the community—Partners in health

The influence of social forces upon the profession of nursing and the response of it to the new demands for and better nursing services at a minimal cost to the consumers was not the nurses' concern at the decision and policy making level. With the result being primary and the first level contact with the community, the nurse being at the subservient level had to get orders from the medicos even for simplest form of treatment such as hot fomentation for pain and swelling of the foot or rehydration of babies with diarrhoea. However, the time has come to produce and practise our professional knowledge with community partnership.

Today, public health is a goal and not merely a programme participated in by a selected group of persons. It's a goal of the society and the community responsibility. The society looks for a leadership in

The author is the former Vice-President of TNAI. This keynote address was presented by her at the Inaugural Session of the XIII SNA Biennial (Diamond Jubilee) Conference at Bombay on October 27, 1988.

the fulfilment of this goal to all the members of the healing arts.

The public health is no longer a vested interest solely of those community agencies bearing the name, nor is the public health nursing the sole prerogative of that small group of the profession calling themselves 'Public Health Nurses'.

The scientific advancements that are common media for use by all physicians, nurses and other health workers, the newer approach to the problem involved in the improvement of the health of the community need community planning and involvement at all levels of health care. The nurse is much more closer and available source to the community who can give an expert leadership in the health matters such as preventing, promoting and maintenance of health by involving the community members who are readily accepted by the society in teaching health rules. The nurse applies her understanding of human behaviour to her work with all her patients, families, homes, schools, industries and hospitals.

The nurse having the knowledge of social sciences can get best co-operation from the community and provide dynamic leadership. The participation by the community can be by providing the facilities, manpower and logistic support for improving and maintaining the health of the people. The community can be actively involved in studying its problems and deciding upon the feasible solutions and implementing them. An equally important contribution that people can make is by joining in and using the health services that are provided for them, this particularly in preventive and protective measures. The duty of the members of health profession, particularly of nursing, is to take measures to enlighten the community in health matters so as to ensure that the people can participate individually and collectively as part of their contribution and duty in planning, implementing and controlling the activities for their health related developments. The nurse in the hospital or in the community agency applies her understanding of human behaviour to her work with all her patients, families in the homes and in clinics. This then makes the leaders of nursing profession think seriously to bring about a suitable change in the nursing curriculum at all levels of nursing education and practice to support health for all.

## Nursing education and practice to support Health for All

We say that nursing is both an art and science, and is being taught in schools and colleges of nursing. But these skills and the knowledge of health preservation practice and prevention of diseases, we nurses failed to apply outside the four walls of the hospitals



until the modern times. The quality of nursing involves adventuring in human understanding in all its manifestations in health and in sickness including understanding and working with persons. The nursing leaders must recognize the organic relationship between nursing and social sciences. The schools and colleges of nursing are now recognising the social lag and are making plans for initiating more dynamic programme by including social sciences in basic and advance curriculum programme. New frontiers need to be explored, new techniques of service discovered and more vital curriculum planning of nursing education put into effect beginning with the students' first introduction to the professional education.

A recognition of these trends implies a responsibility on the part of nursing professionals to develop in the practitioners a constructive view about human behaviour in all its manifestations and to define the unique contribution of the nurse to the development of the healthy individuals and to care for the individuals who are in distress. Here I would like to quote the Chinese poem—

Go to the people, live among them,  
Learn from them, love them,  
Start with what they know,  
Build on what they have,  
But of the best leaders,  
When their task is accomplished,  
Their work is done, The people all remark,  
"WE HAVE DONE IT OURSELVES."

The health promoters in the health team, who being the members of the community are excellent bridges between the users and the providers of the health services. The health promoters have played a key role in community to organise, to participate in care action. The nursing profession applies its body of knowledge in practical services which are vital to human welfare. The preventive and promotive aspects of health in nursing must be seen in all her work. She must learn to see her patients as members of families and as participants in community life. Educating the people about health, and healthy living is a challenge to the health profession. The health education is the vital part in supporting health for all. This should be imparted in the hospital wards from the day of his admission, in clinics and in primary health centres.

The most effective health education is given when a person feels the need for it most when he is sick. In the hospital a person has plenty of time to think about his health. He can be supported to develop new perspectives and attitudes to health. The health professionals know that the health is more than mere absence of diseases. "Health is the creation of the condition of physical, mental and social well being, so that the individual and the society may realize their full potential." The health professionals are very much the part of the community who could set the example by observing and practising the rules of prevention of diseases and preservation of health by developing good health habits. The nurse being the part of the community should be able to educate the

society by practising 'HEALTH IN ACTION'.

"In our country for over 300 million people below the poverty line, health rather being with food and clean drinking water than the tonics and tablets" According to Alma Ata Declaration 1978, Health for All, states, primary health care, based on education concerning health problems, preventing and controlling them. These are based on education concerning the good health habits. The provision of safe drinking water, nutrition, basic sanitation, maternal and child health care, family planning, immunisation and promotion of mental health.

#### People's health in people's hand

Prevention is better than cure. This dictum we know very well. However do we practise it in our day today living? Not only that, do we really know and understand the health culture of our people? It's true that each person is responsible for his or her health. However, ignorance and social taboos, which are harmful to the health of the people, need to be eradicated.

It is stated that in our country people spend more on luxury than on health maintenance. Here again there is need for educating the people about good health habits and maintenance of their health, by regular check up and following the health rules. Everyone must inculcate civic sense for maintaining environmental cleanliness. As stated earlier, health professionals are the first to observe and practise good health habits and to set the example to the community. ACTION SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS.

In conclusion, I hope that all of us feel the challenge, "Health for All—and All for Health". What a privilege we each can have to play our part in making Healthy India. The health is a condition to be achieved through personal and collective efforts at home, school and work. The physical, mental and spiritual health is not a commodity to be provided or delivered. It's a state of well being achieved by the individuals and the community through their own efforts.

Friends, these are a few guidelines for you all to explore effective avenues as nursing professionals and members of the community to achieve the fabulous goal of HEALTH FOR ALL—and ALL FOR HEALTH, by the year 2000 AD.

#### References

1. Health Care in China--Report of Study Group 1974, Geneva Christian Med. Commission.
2. Nursing in Modern Society by Mary Ella Chayer.
3. Meeting Health Needs of Individuals and Nation. Report on a conf. Jan. 1987.
4. Hospital Administration, I.H.A. Jan. 1985 Vol. 21. No. 3 & 4, Dec. 1985.
5. Hospital Administration I.H.A. March, June, Sept. 1986 Vol. 23 and Dec. 86.
6. Hospital Administration I.H.A. March 1988 Vol. 22.