

Upgrading Nursing Performance by Upgrading Nursing Education

Dr. (Mrs.) M. Dean

Nursing education at the University level started nearly four decades ago in India. The first Colleges of Nursing were started in Delhi and Vellore with the Universities of Delhi and Madras respectively. It was felt necessary to prepare nurses to carry out responsibilities of an expanded and extended role in the hospital set-up as well as in the community. In other words, nursing education was expected to prepare nurses for preventive, promotive, supportive and rehabilitative roles besides attending to the curative aspects. The upgrading of nursing education, however, has been very slow. The impact of performance by the graduates of the university programs could have been more effective if they had been prepared in sufficient number and also employed by the State Governments for the health care delivery at the various levels, including school health, industries, etc.

Progress of Nursing Education

A hundred years ago, nurses did not possess a formal basic education. They were trained on the job for a period of 3-6 months to assume a traditional and practical role. They took responsibility of house-keeping chores, and were considered more or less as a mother-head in the hospital wards. Moreover, nursing in those days was procedure-oriented. Care patterns established by the founder of modern nursing, Florence Night

ingale, were chiefly concerned with nursing care procedures. These aimed at providing an environment of cleanliness and maintaining proper sanitation, which has now been taken over by other members of the health care team. The comfort and care procedures provided by the nurses to the patients has been affected by the growth of medical technology. Thus the scope of nursing has narrowed down. This limited approach to nursing has proved inadequate over the time. Thus, a conceptual approach to care has emerged most recently through imparting university education in nursing. The aim is to care for a complex society with diverse needs.

What is a Conceptual Approach?

The conceptual approach to nursing consists of utilizing many ideas (theories) from various disciplines to formulate a holistic approach to nursing. Man and his needs are studied through the subjects such as sociology, psychology, religion and medicine, besides the biological sciences. Man is part of all that is within and around him - whether it be a cell, organ, system, family or society; man is more than the sum of all his parts. Man's behaviour, his characteristic responses give cues to recognize his health needs. Man must maintain an optimal level of oxygen-carbon dioxide exchange, fluid and food intakes, rest and activity, elimination of waste products and temperature regulation. In nursing, the basic needs which a person is unable to meet himself are

anticipated and met. The priority of care depends on the priority of needs of the person.

A Systematic Approach to Nursing

The use of scientific methods give a systematic approach to nursing. Similarly, the use of research done in other disciplines helps the nurse to enhance the health care which gives a broader perspective to nursing. The scientific method begins with identifying a problem through repeated observations from which generalizations can be made. A hypothesis, a tentative theory or statement of relationships between particular phenomena, is formulated. The validity of the hypothesis is then tested by data collection and analysis.

Nursing process is a problem solving mode of action using the scientific method. The steps of nursing process are : assessment (identifying needs), intervention (ministering to the needs) and evaluation (validating the effectiveness of help given). The knowledge and skill received through nursing education and practice, combined with personality, compassion and commitment can produce the effective art of nurturing (nursing). The role of nurses today is changing from that of working primarily for the physician or the hospital to that of being assistant/supporter of the patient, individual or family.

A physician is often too specialized and occupied with his own

The author is the Principal and Professor of Nursing, College of Nursing, CMC, Ludhiana

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schedule of programme to the extent that the patient feels divided among several specialists. He is afraid to ask questions as to how it will affect his complete life. The patient seeks help of a physician for illness and treatment but not for staying well. On the other hand, the response to the whole person and the family of the patient by the nurse is crucial whether he is ill or well. Today, a nurse is to be prepared to be a caring person who can interpret health care services, can serve as a coordinator for members of the health team, and coordinate health care activities effectively, based upon the close relationship and identified needs of the individual, family and community.

The Nursing Programme at the University

Considering these few concepts which are basic to nursing today, let us ask ourselves, is the nursing education preparing the present nursing manpower in the country to meet the needs? Are thousands of nurses working in the various health care delivery systems/ hospitals aware of what their extended roles are? Are we still procedure-oriented, that is a hundred years behind? The new education policy is geared to expand and extend better education. Both education and services go hand in hand since one feeds into, and is fed by the activities of the other. They are interdependent on each other.

A Community Health Nursing Orientation

The majority of the nursing students are oriented to the hospital nursing rather than the Community Health Nursing. The curriculum thus emphasizes the nursing concepts as applicable to a community setting with integration of

social and biological sciences. For example, during the I semester of First year, the students apply concepts of the Nursing Process to a family setting through their field work. They are attached to a Health Centre and community area. The students prepare family care plans under the guidance of Nursing teachers and through the guidelines provided to them for a meaningful application of theory learnt in the classroom. During the II semester of the Second year, in addition to the Community Health Nursing courses, it is planned that the students will have field work not only in urban areas but also at the rural and slum levels. Regular seminars and presentations of field work also strengthen their learning of the classroom discussions. Problem identification for nursing study is another activity during these semesters, which enhances systematic approach. A team concept of health care delivery is inculcated through this experience. The students collect data for the health problems identified, and write a paper and submit at the end of the semester. These semester courses and urban rural experience with definite evaluation of the knowledge, attitudes and skills are planned to prepare them to be professional nurses who will function in any area of care.

A Professional Nurse

A Professional Nurse is expected to look at health issues, or at patients' problems with understanding and insight in order to identify, supervise, find solutions, and to improve the situation whether in a community or hospital. She should have potential managerial skills, communication skills and skills in inter-personal relationships. She should be an organizer trying to organize her community field/ward or area of work with resources and

staff available. She should be able to understand the disease process and the rationale of management, and understand the patients'/ people's needs. She should be capable of recognizing emergencies or alarm signals and act appropriately until the physician arrives. If diagnosis and treatment are important, implementing and monitoring their effectiveness are as important as their prescription. For example, a surgeon operates on a patient, but the intelligent post-operative nursing care and following the line of prescribed treatment, will only bring the patient to quick recovery and prevent complications.

A well educated nurse, capable of independent action while identifying patients' problems, assessing the needs, taking immediate action, anticipating and evaluating by careful management will save the patient. This necessitates a program of studies with a strong background in the biological, physical and social sciences with nursing concepts.

The institution which seems to be most appropriate for providing leadership to the Medical profession is also the one which can provide nursing education, that is the university and medical colleges. The ability to think critically, to teach, supervise, improvise when necessary and to function as a member of the health team needs a special type of program in an institution of higher learning. The basic collegiate program should provide highest level of nursing education with specialization in certain areas of care.

It is only those nurses who have been educated to perform well in any situation - community or hospital wards can develop leadership qualities.

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Health Nurse can do to meet the needs of the school children in her area. Thus, she can contribute for early detection of diseases and promotion of health to the school children and help in achieving the objective of Health For All by 2000 A.D.

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They will gain confidence in themselves. The profession as a whole will progress in the quality of performance skills and knowledge.

Conclusion

The educational system should provide opportunities to develop professional and individual abilities and skills in the context of manpower needs and resources for the country. Upgrading nursing education through university programmes at all the medical college hospitals will enhance and upgrade performance. The drive towards upgrading and having two to three levels of education, including university education, will enable the profession to standardize skill and

performance. The Faculty of Nursing as envisaged by the Indian Nursing Council, will be able to prepare professional nurses for the health care system.

With this above goal, the Indian Nursing Council has integrated community care in all its educational programs to prepare graduates with a variety of experiences in the health field. They are being prepared as Community Health Nurses and also to be the professional nurses.



Poverty Likely to Decline in Year 2000: Says World Bank Report

A new "World Development Report", the first major study of the world's poor in a decade, issued on 16 July by the World Bank, states that poverty is likely to decline in the year 2000, except in sub-Saharan Africa.

The World Bank, the largest provider of aid to developing countries, says in the Report that 1.1 billion people - one fifth of the world's population - still live with annual incomes of less than \$ 370 a year. The world's poverty is concentrated in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where around 50 per cent of population is poor.

Presenting key conclusions to the press at United Nations Headquarters recently, Lyn Squire, Staff Director of the World Bank's 1990 Development Report, said it was especially significant because it was about the "ultimate objective of development - the eradication of poverty".

He said that in the coming decade, the Bank would concentrate more consistently on ridding the world of poverty by following a comprehensive two-part strategy: generating better income-earning opportunities for labour, and disseminating new technologies in order to increase the capacity of the poor to respond to those opportunities.

Where both parts of the strategy had been implemented, the poor had not only benefited from economic growth, they had contributed to it, he said. On that basis the

Report was able to conclude that stimulating growth and helping the poor were mutually reinforcing objectives.

The study found that there had been some progress against poverty in developing countries that had taken part in the overall economic growth which had occurred since the 1960's. Indonesia, for instance, had reduced the share of its population in poverty from almost 60 per cent to less than 20 per cent, Mr Squire said.

The Report called for increased flow of aid to the poor countries but only where countries were seriously committed to the reduction of poverty. Mr Squire pointed out that cutting military expenditure in the industrialized countries by just 10 per cent could pay for a doubling of aid.

Source: UN Newsletter

Herbal Cure Hopes For Arthritis

Joint research being carried out at Sunderland Polytechnic in north-east England and India's University of Poona is seeking to establish whether traditional Indian medicines could provide a herbal cure for arthritis.

The project involves the use of ayurvedic medicines, which have been used for thousands of years in India but are still largely unknown in the West. Ayurvedic medicine, using herbs, dates back to 5000 BC and is still widely used as an alternative to modern techniques, particularly among poorer people.

Professor Malcolm Hooper, who heads the Polytechnic team, believes the Western world has a lot to learn from ayurvedic medicine. He explained: "It is safe to say that so far the attempts to find a cure for such ailments as arthritis have failed to find a solution. Ayurvedic medicine is just one possible remedy and although herbs have been used in India for a long time there has been no way of monitoring just how effective they can be. We want to examine them more closely with the ultimate aim of providing a relatively cheap and accessible form of treatment."

The research has the backing of medical consultants in Britain, and clinical trials are planned for India. Prof. Hooper continued: "It is very much early days and more a question of hope than anything else at the moment. But the point of research is to find out what is possible. It will be several years before anything is proved".

Scientists from Poona University are currently in Britain to help with the research. In return, staff and students from Sunderland will visit India.

Source: British Information Service