

STANDARD VERSUS STATUS

Mrs. Rosamma Ninan

VARIED improvements are noticed in nursing education when its gradual development is examined. But still it is not time to claim that nursing education is satisfactory. The aim is far to reach. To fill the gap it is necessary to detect the pit falls affecting the educational system and treat them promptly and properly for nursing to be worth of calling a noble profession. Proper education alone makes the difference. What is the main problem we note at present in nursing education? A close and careful analysis is the answer to the above questions.

The aim of nursing education is to prepare first level nurses. The objectives also will be in accord with the aim. Are the means to reach these aims and objectives sufficient? What are the obstacles on the way?

Once I was visiting a sick nursery where I found a baby was being cared for suddenly developed dyspnoea. The nurse available there was a first year student—a beginner in nursing who was in a state of bewilderment not knowing what to do; the doctors were annoyed; the baby was suffering. Many more such examples are in the store.

The fact that an efficient and well educated nurse can work intelligently, help doctor wisely and comfort the patient with understanding, is not realised either by the doctor or by the patient. Consequently the medical profession who dominate nursing profession and public at large who is ignorant about the value of nursing give little importance to nurses' education. The student who is not well pre-

pared is assigned in wards without sufficient supervision to deal with the total care of the patient. As a result the patient loses confidence in the nurse and he carries a wrong impression about the nurse. The nurse deprived of appreciation and recognition, suffers from retarded professional growth.

The deficiency is to be treated by senior members of the profession. Once a student just finishing first year examination was asked to nurse a serious cardiac patient. Seeing the heavy task in front of her she approached the ward sister to report her inability to shoulder the heavy responsibility. The answer of the ward sister was that she did not have any staff or senior student to relieve her. There is supposed to be clinical instructor in the ward to stand by the student to give her clinical experiences and this protect the patient from being harmed by the by-products of training mistakes.

In the absence of clinical instructors the ward sister should be ready to teach the student and solve her problems. But what is the qualification and experience of the ward sister? If not all, many of them have become ward sisters by promotion. As regards to her qualification, the training she has received is the same that of nurse whom she has to guide now. She has no inservice or continuing education to further her knowledge. Generally no attempt is made either by herself or by the institution to refresh her knowledge that she has achieved previously. Contrary to the ideal practice, the qualified ward sister is rarely seen in the wards.

What about the tutor's supervision in the Ward? A tutor gets

any time to spare for the student in the ward. Often she has to deal with two or more subjects in teaching. No time is left after finishing preparation and presentation of two or three classes daily, sometimes more. She needs time for correcting paper and counselling students too.

Can we change today's system of nursing education?

If the tutor wants her student to be a good quality product, she ought to cultivate the seed in a fertilised soil. She, for this purpose should be given sufficient time and one subject with one class a day so that at least 3 or 4 hours she can spend with the student in the ward. When the subject is specified and limited to one, the tutor becomes proficient in her subject, teaching becomes better and she needs less time for preparation for the class.

The ward sister also should be of equal status and equal education with the tutor so that they can work in a mutual understanding with each other for the betterment of the education and the patient's care. Both the ward sister and the tutor should sit together to decide upon the syllabus that they should cover in clinical teaching. As far as possible the classes should be conducted in the ward with the patient available as teaching aid. How many of our nursing schools hold ward teaching at regular basis? How often? In order to avoid interference in the ward work, time for organised clinical teaching should be set aside when the ward load is light. Incidental teaching can be given at other times.

Students should not merely be used for service at the expense of their education. Many
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instances are there where the students miss classes on account of not being relieved from the ward due to shortage of nurses or some other reasons. On the other hand if sufficient nurses are available in the ward, then the student is used for unskilled work like cleaning and running to get reports from Lab, X-Ray department and giving messages etc. It is not justifiable except in emergency situation, because there is no learning experience in repeating such activities.

Education involves all round development. Extra-curricular activities help the students po-

tentialities to bloom to the fullest. It helps her for better action and interaction. Also it provides room to widen her qualities of initiative, leadership, co-operation. It enables the student to realise the need for recreation as contributing factor to mental health. Extra-curricular activity is a ventilator to air out the mental tension and anxiety which she has accumulated from wards and class room.

After long hours of ward work and hard period of study, it is injustice to demand from the student that she should be active, unless she is provided with proper facilities and sufficient time for recreation and extra-

curricular activities. Under any circumstances the student should not be put more than eight hours work including classes and clinical experience in the ward. Asking them to attend classes interrupting their sleep after night duty should be condemned. As far as possible all the students should be freed together from the ward so that everyone gets a chance to participate in the recreation, games and variety entertainment.

Improved education is the only way to raise the standard of nursing and to get its deserving status. If the plant is not watered and nourished with proper care today, don't expect a fruitful tree tomorrow.

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