

Nursing Education and Child Care

Brief for International Year of the Child

Miss B. A. DEVANESAN,
Reader in Public Health
Nursing, Madras Medical
College, Madras, outlines the
perspective of Nursing educa-
tion with reference to child
health.

THE Nursing profession has always been dedicated to the preservation and restoration of life of individuals at all stages. Health care needs and problems of the children of this country are obvious and glaring and experts rightly say that care of the individual should start from the pre-conceptual stage till the adolescent period.

The W.H.O. Expert Committee on Maternal Child Health Services states that "the objectives of Maternal and Child Health (M.C.H.) services begin with the immediate health problems of mothers and children and extend to health throughout life and to community health. Through concern with child development and the health education of parents and children, the ultimate objectives of Maternal Child Health services is life long health. The effect of careful and informed mothering on the health of the entire family and the relation of family health to community health are important factors in individual, community and national development."

The Demands

The complexity of nursing services especially in the field of child care today, whether given in hospitals, other institutions, or homes, require an expertise to meet the demands of child care. The demand for hospital beds forces many patients into the community while they are in need of skilled nursing care. With ever-increasing need for nurse manpower both in the hospitals and community, patients and family care tends to

become fragmented with an increase of auxiliary and primary health care workers. While we greatly appreciate the various approaches taken by the Government in the utilisation of community health workers, in order to understand the need and problems of children both in health and in illness it seems obvious that a highly skilled professional nurse in all areas of child care is very important, for giving skilled direct patient care, teaching and supervision. It is said that every nurse is a teacher besides being a practitioner, preparation for this new role should, in addition to Indian Nursing Council requirement, include content in such areas as dynamics of behaviour, and family as bases for understanding deviations from the normal. It should include simple research tools to enable nurses to study children under stress. Nurses should be prepared in communication with children and their parents and with members of other disciplines which contribute to the health team in providing health care.

In order to face the critical situation in providing health care for a growing population of children nurses must be adequately prepared both in the basic and post-basic education. While the Indian Nursing Council sets the minimum standards, schools and colleges of nursing should give emphasis more on primary family oriented child care and child health supervision in a variety of settings. Additional emphasis should be placed on the area of normal growth and development, patient assessment, interviewing, counselling, family teaching, childhood illnesses and child health care services. Further, a nurse should be prepared to assist parents to rear healthy children and to help them manage the ordinary illnesses, development problems and day-to-day situations. The role of the nurse in school health which

does not get much recognition should be seen to.

The basic training of the nurse requires reviewing and strengthening of the curriculum. The curricula should enable the students to acquire knowledge and experience about the total needs and requirements of the mother and child in the context of the family and changing society (i.e., physical, biological, psychological and environmental conditions) at each state of the development cycle and about the ill effects of unmet needs of growth and survival.

Inservice Training

While basic education should be reviewed and strengthened, top priority should be given to inservice training and continuing education for previously trained personnel. Staff development is an essential pre-requisite for the improvement of child health services. New approaches to family welfare, nutrition and human development, parental problems and the management and delivery of integrated maternal child health/family welfare should be included. These might include supplementary courses, lectures, staff conferences, seminars, workshops, staff meetings and group discussions emphasizing the problem solving process and joint evaluation of service coverage and utilization.

The community oriented Paediatric Nurse practitioner programme should be considered as part of inservice education programme in collaboration with the College of Nursing. The community oriented Paediatric Nurse practitioner should be able to assess the health history and record the child's health and developmental history from the parents in a systematic, accurate and concise form, to do a basic paediatric physical examination using various techniques and instruments like stethoscope correctly, to differentiate between normal and abnormal findings on screening for physical assessment and know when to refer the child to a physician for evaluation of supervision, to use developmental screening tests to discriminate between normal and abnormal child developments and

refer children with abnormal findings to a paediatrician; to give guidance and counselling regarding feeding, common illness and other relevant problems of child rearing; to recognize common childhood illness, refer when necessary and treat minor disorders per standing orders; to plan and implement a predetermined immunization programme; to identify the community health resources and teach the parents in their use; to do home visits in order to assess the coping ability of parents, set priorities in meeting their health related problems and take appropriate nursing action; to make decision based on her own nursing knowledge and practice as well as with the consultation of the physician.

Thus the Paediatric Nurse practitioner will be a great asset to the physician and the community in the care of children.

Post-Graduate Education

The objective is for actual and potential leaders to acquire a broad understanding of, and be sensitive to, the total needs of mothers and children including the social aspects of care at the primary level. We need nurses with B.Sc. and M.Sc. qualifications to take over the leadership functions of planning, teaching and research, administration, supervision and consultation and those of clinical specialists.

Teachers of nurses need re-education and re-orientation in order to prepare nurses to meet the health needs of the growing child population. The co-ordinated teaching of paediatrics, obstetrics, and social medicine and community health jointly in schools and colleges of nursing from the beginning in the curriculum would lead to balanced attitudes towards the maternal and child health care.

It is the responsibility of institutions such as the Institute of Child Health to organize and conduct innovative programmes for nursing personnel of India and assist them in giving quality nursing care for children who are the nation builders of tomorrow and the nation's most valuable resource.

DONATIONS

January and February, 1978

			Rs.
Flood Relief Fund		Anonymous	100.00
	Rs.	General Fund	
Mrs. N. Jayamma,		Miss A. Moora,	
Gulbarga	20.00	Boxburg	189.00
Miss G. A. Ram,		Mr. K.P. Venu-	
New Delhi	1000.00	gopal, Alberta	100.00
Miss M.V. Ammini,		Mrs Van der Gracht	100.00
New Delhi	101.00	Ms. Grace Cherian,	
Nursing Staff, Bejoy		New York	40.00
Chand		Miss Elsamma Mathew,	
Hospital, Burdwan	140.00	Delhi	50.00
Ms E.J. Samuel,		Miss M.K. Patel,	
Durg	50.00	Leicester	75.00
Ms A.J. Solomon			
and Friends,		Nurses' Welfare Fund	
Kuwait	2500.00		
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