

STUDENTS ROLE IN IMPROVING THE IMAGE OF A NURSE (I)

SOME EXCERPTS

A seminar on students' role in improving the image of a nurse was presented by student nurses at the recent biennial conference of student nurses. The participants were six third year student nurses from Medical College, Goa and Govt. School of Nursing, Goa. We will bring out this seminar in two instalments. In the first series the views of the first three speakers are presented under the headings : Non-nursing duties are a stumbling block. It is a give and take and what public thinks about a nurse.

The moderator Miss Moizinha Diniz introduced the participants and opened the seminar with these remarks, "Each one of us have chosen to put before you today actual experiences during our training period and several facts collected from eminent professionals and the public."

NON-NURSING DUTIES ARE A STUMBLING BLOCK

Moizinha Diniz

The role of a student in improving the image of a nurse is great indeed and let me tell you at the very outset that this topic contains three factors, namely the nurse, the image and the student.

Briefly a nurse is an artist who performs the art of nursing. There are two images of a nurse : one that was in the past and the second the improved image of a nurse.

In the past nurse was known to be a person with a motherly touch and one having a friendly appeal, a person full of love and sacrificing attitudes and dedication. A person who took orders from a doctor and did what she was told.

This includes the image of the past plus what today's education makes her with an added knowledge in all Basic Sciences etc. which prepares her to be more capable, more reliable, more independent, more efficient in her work. It also increases her potentiality of assisting the doctor more efficiently and methodically, skilfully and she becomes more disciplined. Who is a student ? Commonly known as the young learner, she is the most important part of the topic that I'm assigned to speak on.

The great Indian and Vedanta philosopher Swami Vivekananda said "Man is born to conquer nature, not to follow it". Based on

this profound saying of a great man, a student should build her image on the past and add a step of perfection to the present and the future. The student nurse has to perfect the art of nursing and implement it rather than follow the past with the same defects and shortcomings in the training programmes. Naturally a student nurse is in the process of conquering the art of nursing and capturing the imagination of the public to improve image of a nurse of today.

A student nurse is a young person full of energy with an urge to improve her personality. She has a greater grasping power of new ideas. During her training she picks up new techniques and skills in the art of nursing and the technical know-how of medical-surgical nursing. Naturally, now her commitments are greater and her responsibilities more. These take her off to a higher platform where she projects a much better and an improved image of a nurse today.

Normally a student nurse spends 3 years or more to be a full-fledged nurse, a 'recognised nurse'—this itself projects an improved image of a nurse, because in spite of the hardships one has to face, in spite of all other tensions, in spite of leaving her dear ones behind, a student nurse is prepared to stick to her nursing course because she

understands very well that she is wanted by the patients. With this she improves the dignity of her profession and hence projects an improved image of a nurse.

In order to reinforce further, some of the old and traditional nursing practices which have been handed from one generation of nurses to another and which we practise till today—that is dusting and cleaning, I think that this practice especially in the hospital wards should be done away with. Perhaps, here our nurse leaders may not agree with me but we too know that what we learn is based on scientific principles. Now, since we form the part of the present day generation of youth, we know how this practice is looked down upon by our contemporaries as well as the public and as a result we are frustrated and the image of nurse that is formed in the mind of the public is that of a domestic servant. In many modern institutions these domestic duties are taken over by a special department called the "House maintenance Department". Again, this will provide the 1st. year students with more time at the bedside and carry out their fundamentals of nursing practices more peacefully and accurately—which again will go a long way to enhance the prestige of a nurse in the eyes of the public as there will naturally be more communication between students and patients and their visitors. Human relations will improve definitely and these activities will place the image of a nurse on a higher pedestal in our society.

Further, as young adolescent students, we have terrible adjustments to make from the day we enter the nursing profession and throughout our training period and even throughout our career. Often, one of the most difficult adjustments which we have to make is when a female nurse has to give nursing care to male patients. It is embarrassing to men-patients as well. There are many members of the public who ask, why no men-nurses for men-patients? Again, here the public forms a different opinion about us. It is not the same with the female doctors, because they are not in constant touch with the patients as we nurses are. Therefore, if there were men-nurses also for men-patients, I feel it could go a long way in improving the image of a nurse in our country.

Medical sciences are ever advancing and as a result new technology is put in medical practice in which we students find ourselves completely at a loss. Instead of orientating us as students and nurses, teachers and nurse-supervisors, we see the technicians taking lead in these affairs and the nurses are being pushed at the back stage. Why not include these new technological aspects into our general training—which will definitely improve the image of a nurse in our country. In regard to these our contemporaries ask us as to where do we stand as far as the new technology in medical sciences is concerned which they know and see being used in diagnosing and treatment of the patients. If we, as students, have an opportunity to learn during our training, our image will improve.

only we will be able to improve the image of a nurse.

In a health team, the responsibility of the total patient care has been laid on a nurse. The nurse today has to play not only the role of providing custodial care, technical care, but also a supportive and counselling role. She has to encourage the patient in the sickness, and has to work with the patients and his family towards his early recovery.

In view of the changing role of a nurse in the community today it becomes imperative that nurses learn about the social sciences to understand people in a better manner.

In short it may be said that in addition to acquiring the basic technical knowledge about nursing we must develop the art of dealing with individuals. In turn, individuals will have respect for nurses. If we can attain this then nurses will gain the status and the respect from community and get all things done. It is here that our present student nurse may turn out to be future Florence Nightingales and project a more improved image of a nurse.

IT IS A GIVE AND TAKE

Maria Santana D'Souza

Great strides have been made in all spheres of human activity which also speaks for the nursing profession. Florence Nightingale in 1893 had said, "We are on the threshold of nursing. In future, which I shall not see, for I am old, but I hope new methods will be found by which every infant, every human being, will have the best chance of recovery, be learned and practised, and persons will come forward who have personally experienced the hard and practical work of nursing, will organise nursing reforms". 1893 is a far cry. Nursing profession has made great strides since that day, yet there is scope for improvement.

It has been said that the reputation of a medical institution depends on the attitudes and understanding of a nurse; the number of patients treated may be counteracted by the devotion and love for our profession.

Any hospital or Health centre is a public utility centre or a community centre, the activities of which are

closely woven in that community life. It is there the students learn and put into practice what they are taught. It is here the public or the community makes our learning at all levels possible, and we as students have a duty to make use of these opportunities, and give back in return by the same measure by our good practice.

If this responsibility is realised by every student nurse, then I think with our devotion towards the sick and the well in the field work in the community, we can help to improve the image of the nurse.

If hospital life is of unmixed blessings, then the fact that needs to be stressed is that every student wishing to be a qualified nurse, must at the same time keep in mind that she is not dealing with machines but human life, life that cannot be valued by any human standards. If we can take care of these things to meet the great demands being made on us then

WHAT PUBLIC THINKS ABOUT A NURSE

Precila Machado

Before one can attempt to deliberate on the student's role in improving the image of a nurse or what public thinks about a nurse it is necessary to analyse the type of life she lives. As a student I would like to share with you the type of life a student lives. It is as a student that the nurse lays the foundation to build her career. It is during this period that she comes in close contact for the first time with the patients and the public. This experience indeed makes her life rich and at the same time demands her making new adjustments with people.