

Leprosy and the Nurse of Today

By Mrs. Achyamma John*

LEPROSY is a disease that was known to the world from time immemorial. In early days people thought of it as a curse from God. As a result a leprosy patient was always looked down upon, which in turn made the patients themselves feel demoralised.

Leprosy is widespread throughout India. In some parts of the country the prevalent rate is as high as 40 per 1000 population. As per W.H.O, Leprosy in any community with the prevalence rate of 1 per 1000 population or higher is considered as a public health problem. We find that no part of this country is spared from Leprosy.

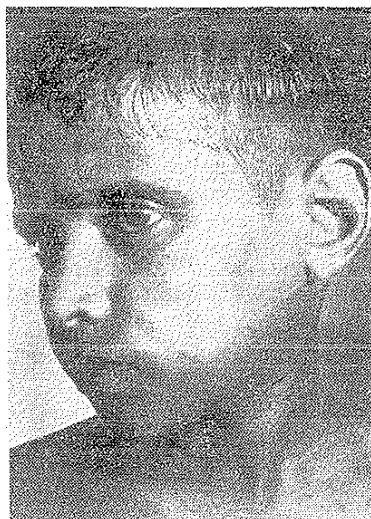
Thus nurses in the country have to think seriously about their responsibilities. Is there anything that we can do?

I have seen doctors and nurses even in this modern era fearing to approach a leprosy patient. We cannot blame them because they are part of our society and culture which always look down upon these patients. So the first responsibility of the teachers and leaders of nursing today is to change their own attitude and in turn the students of today. Thus we can hope to see more and more nurses volunteering to take part in leprosy work.

The nurses should take interest in knowing the latest scientific information about leprosy which will help them to change their attitude towards this disease. The nurses and doctors who were fortunate enough to get the latest scientific knowledge should take an interest in disseminating this idea to colleagues and public. No programme will be successful or respectful if there is no public support which can be obtained only if they are enlightened. The patients who are also part of the society, who always think of themselves as outcast, need a lot of education to change their mental attitude and accept the treatment

and rehabilitation measures with happiness and enthusiasm. Education is a simple word but to educate is a herculian job, specially to break through the age-old customs and traditions.

Who is going to take up this challenge? Can the nurse keep away from it leaving it to the paramedical workers?



Early patch of Leprosy

The leprosy patient is not far from us. As it is a country-wide problem, he is found everywhere in the community, schools, public transport and in the general hospital without knowing that they are suffering from leprosy. The nurse by virtue of her closeness with the people more than the rest of the team and the varieties of skill she possesses, is at an advantage of communicating to each other better. The nurse through her observations and conversation finds out the presence of this disease in the people, helps the doctor to make a proper diagnosis and then the patient to accept it and do his part to get relief from it. The acceptance on the part of the patient regarding treatment and rehabilitation depends

on the way the nurse approaches the problem. This is possible only if the nurse is taught the know-how of leprosy and technique of education. The present day nurse is getting the required information in the classroom but she is not exposed to this programme sufficiently to accept the work in this field as a challenge. Along with the theoretical instruction, actual participation in the field programme is highly essential for her to gain the skill.

Leprosy is a field where the treatment facilities known at present are not satisfactory. So research is going on to find an easy solution. The nurse has a valuable contribution to make with the research to find a feasible programme for tomorrow.

WANTED (Contd. f. p. 2)

Wanted the following qualified Staff: (a) Sister Tutor for General Nursing School, (b) Midwifery Tutor, (c) Staff Nurses. Apply with references and qualifications to the Nursing Superintendent, Catherine Booth Hospital, Nagercoil-629001, Tamil Nadu.

Wanted for RURAL HOSPITALS of the Emmanuel Hospital Association—

Two Nursing Superintendents—having had an advanced administration course in nursing plus five years experience in administration.

Three Senior Sisters or Male Charge Nurses—capable of taking charge of small hospitals with less than 60 beds.

One Public Health Nurse—to give class room teaching and also supervise field work.

One Tutor for ANM School
Protestant Christians only need apply to: The Nursing Co-ordinator, Emmanuel Hospital Association, C-9, Safdarjung Development Area, (Opp. IIT Main Gate), New Delhi-110016.

GREETINGS AND GOOD WISHES

For a

MERRY X'MAS &
HAPPY NEW YEAR

My thoughts and prayers are daily with all those who care for and are concerned with the welfare and well-being of those in need of their thoughtful care.

FLORENCE H. MARTYN

225 W. 106th St. Apt. 9J
New York-10025

Adv't

*Prof. of Community Nursing, College of Nursing, C.M.C. Hospital, Vellore.