

IT'S HIGH TIME TO ACT NOW

K. C. AGGARWAL

This is the second and concluding part of the article by the author. The first part appeared in our issue of October 1976.

HHEALTH problems of individuals, families and communities at large are influenced by a multiple of factors. How do people behave when they or their family members face health problems is also influenced by a multiple of socio-economic and cultural factors. Therefore, it implies that health professionals, particularly nurses, should first understand the factors responsible for the presence or absence of health problems in a community.

Once the nature of the problem and factors responsible for it are known, a nurse can decide as to what shall be her role in the intervention strategies to deal with these problems. Such an approach calls for knowledge and understanding, on the part of a nurse, of a variety of behavioural sciences along with her expertise in the field of nursing. It is also to be appreciated that she can not master all the sciences the knowledge of which is necessary to deal with a multiple of health problems. Therefore, nurses alone are prepared neither to diagnose the health problems nor to devise and implement intervention strategies. The wisdom and experience of many professionals are a must in order to find realistic and practical intervention strategies to deal with multi-dimensional health problems with which our community is struggling today.

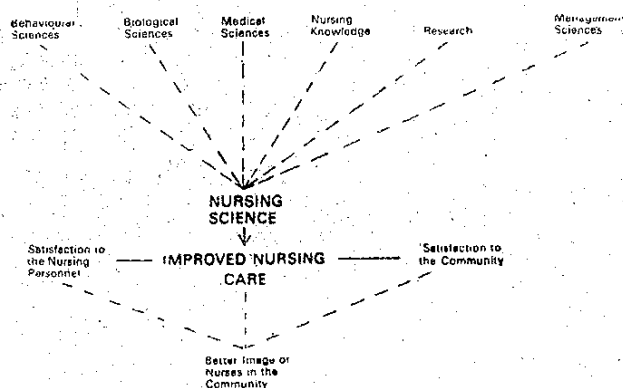


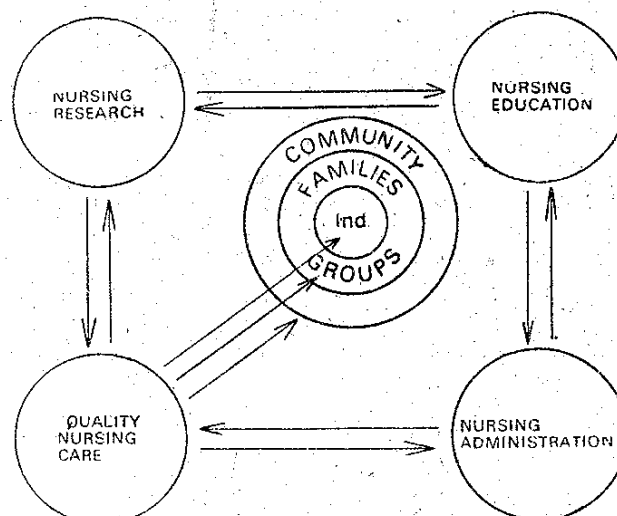
Fig 1

An Inter-Disciplinary Setting

What I have discussed upto now means that nurses are to be prepared in an inter-disciplinary setting if they have to contribute in the alleviation of the sufferings of the community. It means the curricula in nursing are to be based on sound foundations, i.e., on the findings

of research studies. In a scientific and technological world when problems are complex, their solutions are complex, no profession can afford to develop its educational programmes on hypothetical models. Therefore, in India at present the nursing profession should immediately remodel and restructure its educational programmes on the basis of operations research in the field of curriculum development, placement of personnel and deciding about the roles and responsibilities of various nursing personnel.

Fig 2



There has been a lot of thinking on the question of Brain Drain in nursing. Frequently, items appear about the migration of nurses to other countries. Nursing educators and administrators have appreciably kept silent on this question as if they have nothing to do with this problem. Except few investigations at superficial levels, no in-depth study has been conducted which could throw light on the deep rooted motivations and factors responsible for such a trend. This problem again needs a multi-disciplinary approach, and, therefore, collaborative studies with behavioural scientists.

Once the pre-conditions as mentioned in Part I of this article (NJI: October 1976) are met, lots of hurdles in the way of nursing research can be removed. But it is also to be appreciated that some of the pre-requisites mentioned in Part I may remain a dream for the years to come. Thus, there is a challenge before us to create conditions within the existing framework for encouraging nursing research. This challenge can be met effectively with the following measures:

1. *Documentation Centres in all colleges of nursing in the country:* It is a well recognized fact that to plan and conduct any piece of research investigation, relevant literature should be available. Nursing colleges

in the country are situated at privileged places, i.e., in big cities where medical college libraries and university libraries are accessible to college faculties. Therefore, it will be well advisable for college authorities to develop their own documentation centres. In this job college authorities can take the help of national and international agencies having similar centres.

2. *Annotated Bibliographies:* As soon as a research worker decides to take up a piece of research investigation he/she is faced with a problem of paucity of relevant literature to refer to. Since, so far research investigators are also full time teachers or administrators or practitioners, they are unable to devote considerable time to search for relevant literature from various places. To solve this problem, teachers and administrators of nursing can initiate a modest beginning by preparing annotated bibliographies in their fields of specialization and get them published from time to time in *The Nursing Journal of India*. After getting some experience in this field individual teachers and administrators can take up the job of preparing annotated bibliographies on different broad subjects with the help and assistance of professional organisations such as the T.N.A.I.

3. *Teacher Exchange Programmes:* At present, there is very little co-ordination and co-operation amongst various colleges and schools of nursing in the country. Therefore, it is quite possible that many of the nurses may be contributing in a very modest way in the broadening of existing knowledge but very little is known to others. Secondly, it is the interaction of various professionals that sets the pace for an inquisitive mind which is very necessary for a research worker. Therefore, it would be well to arrange teacher exchange programmes in the country. To begin with, such programmes can be confined to nursing institutions but in the long run extended to such colleges and universities departments as are allied to health sciences. This step will widen the horizons of thinking of nurses. It is heartening to note that the U.G.C. has lots of fellowships and scholarships for teacher exchange programmes in the country.

4. The three interest sections of the T.N.A.I., that is, Nursing Education, Nursing Service and Public Health Sections, to begin with, should prepare research outlines and annotated bibliographies in collaboration with the Nursing Research Section of the T.N.A.I. If these sections give leadership in this direction, many more inquisitive minds in the profession will follow their footsteps. The Public Health Section of T.N.A.I. has already started working for the preparation of an annotated bibliography in the field of public health and public health nursing.

5. *Staff College Courses in Research Methodology:* Nursing profession as a whole is a very fertile field for research studies. Often nurses are engaged directly or indirectly in the collection of data in depth regarding patients, families and factors influencing their health and well being. But the problem is that though they have access to a sea of data regarding patients, families and groups, they are not able to put them together and analyse them in a systematic manner due to lack of knowledge in the intricacies of research. Therefore, it is

but logical to suggest that T.N.A.I. and pioneer nursing colleges such as the R.A.K. College of Nursing, New Delhi and the C.M.C. Hospital, Vellore, should start conducting short-term research methodological courses for public health nurses, staff nurses, ward sisters etc. Though these courses, as envisaged, will only give orientation in research methodology, it will go a long way in helping the nurse practitioners to look at things with a reason and objective and thus contribute to the enhancement of nursing knowledge. It will definitely bring about a rational thinking and activity with a purposive type of mental attitude which is so fundamental for the growth of any profession.

6. *Publication of research studies:* Though there had been effort in the field of research in this country, ironically, dissemination of research findings has not taken place. There has been lots of Masters in Nursing theses, but very few have been published. Some may argue that M.Sc. Nursing theses are simply exercises and generalizations from them cannot be made. True, as the argument stands. But the point is that there are very few studies from which universal generalizations can be made. But many similar findings of such theses, written at different points of time and at different places, can help even in generalisations to some extent. The publication of such individual studies will create a desire and sense of motivation in others. It will also bring out the limitations so that others may correct them when they undertake such studies. Research is a process of finding new knowledge, verifying the existing knowledge and modifying it scientifically and systematically and during this process tools and methods are refined continuously. One learns from the mistakes of others.

Summary

Various Socio-economic and cultural factors are responsible as far as health and disease status of individuals, families and communities are concerned. Therefore, health problems demand a multi-disciplinary approach. Since nurses are one of the very effective members of the health team, their education should prepare them to play an effective role. This, in turn, demands that the educational programmes for various categories of nurses should be based on the findings of well planned and implemented research studies. It is also important that various categories of nursing personnel should be encouraged to look at things with reason and purpose. To achieve this end, certain facilities in terms of documentation centres, preparation of annotated bibliographies, teacher exchange programmes, staff college courses in research methodology and publication of research findings are pre-requisites. These are some thoughts which, if put into practice, one believes, much can be achieved even when financial constraints are likely to be faced. The question is whether we should get into the business within the existing resources and constraints or should await till ideal conditions are created. I firmly believe that we should get into the business first, show some tangible results and then ask for pre-conditions as mentioned in the first part of this article. Time is running fast and if we do not act in time, it may prove to be a sad thing in the future which may be beyond repair.