

Nurses in the Hospital—A Sociological Perspective

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Nurses occupy key position in the health team. In the growing complexity of the hospital organization and in the expansion of medical services, the role of nurses are of pivotal importance. The nurses have become not only indispensable for the welfare of the patient, but to a very large extent the achievement of goals of medical system depends upon the way they perform their professional role and the manner in which their interaction with the doctor and the patient takes shape. The diagnosis, the treatment, the care and the rehabilitation of the patient require the services of trained nurses. A sociological understanding of the role performance and the interactive pattern between the nurse and the patient is very useful for the understanding of the function of the hospital organization.

A study conducted by the author in Sir S. L. Hospital, B.H.U., Varanasi, (1970-71) about the nature of interaction among nurses and patients, provided deep insight into the functioning of nursing profession in India. If doctors' behaviour towards nurses is not sympathetic the doctor-patient relationship is affected to the detriment of the patient's welfare and malfunctioning in the hospital organization. And if the relationship between the doctor and the nurse is cooperative, informal and based on mutual understanding then it adds to the smooth functioning of the hospital. But it has been found that in the hospital under study the relationship between the doctor and nurse is

formal and sometimes tentional too. Its repercussion affects the treatment and care pattern of the patient.

It has been found that the majority of the nurses seem to have a well balanced and considerate evaluation of the patient's behaviour and status. Some nurses also consider the patients as very humble, but when patient's view is considered majority of the patients think that the nurses have "voracious appetite for money" and are "careless." Generally it has been observed that patients want the full attention of the nurse individually which is not possible in the hospital situation.

Nurses are directly involved in the welfare of the patients. For this it is necessary that there should be utmost cooperation and rapport between the doctor and the nurse. If the nurse and doctor do not see eye to eye and do not understand the instruction and suggestion of each other then the patient is likely to suffer and his treatment likely to be jeopardised. But it has been found that in the hospital there is not much rapport between doctor and nurse.

The rapport between the nurse and the patient lies in the realm of the problem of communication. The acceptance of the care and treatment of the patient by the nurses becomes only meaningful only when it is properly communicated and understood by the patient. In day-to-day situations many types of patients come to the hospital with diverse background and level of intelligence because of which there is no proper communication between them. The barriers to communication lie in the field of social and

personal factor. Sometimes professional factor also hinders the proper communication. It has been observed that too much work load and shift in duty hours hinder the proper communication between the patient and the nurses.

On the other hand there may be personal factors, such as the non-cooperation of the patient which may hinder the cooperation. Some social factors such as the illiteracy of the patient and the language difficulties also hinder the communication process. It has been found that the relationship between the nurse and the patient is very much influenced by the illiteracy of the patient, 'language difficulties' and 'non-cooperation of the patient'. The nurses who come from outside a particular state do not possess enough command over local dialectics and language and as a result they often face hardship in understanding the patient and in conveying their own ideas to them.

In the hospital nurses want to maintain the visiting hours of the indoor patient in order to help proper functioning of therapeutic activities. But patients want that their relatives and attendants should be always with them.

Thus the observation made by the author during the course of his investigation testifies the fact that there exists a gap in the expected and the actual role performance of the nurses. Their professional role is often subservient in the social and personal considerations. The patient is very much critical of the nurse's role performance and have found them often careless and greedy. The low socio-economic background of the nurses and their high aspiration and the key position occupied by them, in the hospital organization are the important factors which have contributed to the careless and callous attitude of the nurses towards the patients.

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