



Why Not More Male Nurses

By Miss Irene Stephens*

IS THERE a need for more Male Nurses? It is surprising that quite a number of people are of the opinion that Male Nurses are not necessary. I wonder how certain nursing procedures are carried out when male nurses are not employed. Male catheterization is not done by female nurses! Female nurses do not give enemas to male patients! I do not think that female nurses prepare men for abdominal, genito-urinary or rectal surgery! Apart from the unsuitability of female nurses doing this work, I am quite sure that the great majority of men, when intimate nursing duties have to be performed, prefer to be attended to by male nurses. Or are we to allow people with no knowledge of Anatomy or Physiology or of the principles of surgical cleanliness to do this work? Male patients who are mentally ill almost always need the skilled care of a male nurse. In the Psychiatric field there is immense scope for men nurses.

In my opinion one of the areas where male nurses can do a wonderful job is in the field of Public or Community Health. It cannot be denied that there are vast areas where health workers are desperately needed. Female nurses must look after the Midwifery programmes, although even that part of the work is not being done as it should, or could be, because of the great difficulties encountered by the nurses working in rural areas.

Male nurses should not meet these difficulties. They can go out

alone or in groups, by walking or by car, by bicycle or jeep or even the scooter and motor bicycle can be brought into use. The male nurse can be used to do surveys, to give health teaching and to carry out programmes of immunization? Is not the male nurse, trained for Public Health work, the SENSIBLE ANSWER to the great problem we find in getting workers into the areas where there is still so much to be done in the way of taking health or the means to it, to the needy poor? Male nurses could visit village schools and talk to boys, organize health competitions and follow up the boys and the teaching given, in their villages. It is in very few places where in this way, female nurses can work unhindered and unchaperoned. Good male Public Health Nurses can prepare the way into the rural areas for female nurses to enter with their ante-natal and Midwifery programmes. Why, the scope for Male Public Health Nurses is tremendous!

Hospital situated in rural areas have a fine opportunity to organize male nurse teams for public health work. For these hospitals there is no need to provide extra or outside accommodation. At night the nurses can return to their own quarters on or near the hospital compound, after preparing and presenting a report to the Public Health Department Supervisor of their days work.

For such a scheme efficient organisation and supervision is just as necessary as it is for a well run hospital.

Perhaps the main essentials are, understanding, compassion and vision. An understanding of the tremendous need which exists in so many places, compassion for the people who have this need and a vision, large and keen enough to cause a compulsion to see a way to meet the need.

Let us, the members of the Nursing Profession, who are senior and in positions of responsibility and who understand the situation in the rural areas, encourage the MEN in our ranks to show by the quality of their work and character, that they are greatly needed in hospital work and desperately needed to work amongst the masses of people who live in the vast rural areas.

Male Nurses! Come forward! Show your willingness to be trained for the exciting and challenging task of taking health to the rural areas of the country.

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Open Forum is meant to encourage free and frank discussion and comments by nurses on matters of professional interest. Opinion in this column will be published anonymously, if so desired but the name, address and position of the author must be made known to the Editor (not for publication).

Readers' participation alone can make this column a forum for exchange of views.

Please send your article to the Editor, The Nursing Journal of India, L-16, Green Park, New Delhi-110016.

OBITUARY

Miss Ellen Lund, who was Nursing Superintendent at the Union Missionary T.B. Sanatorium, Arogyavaram, Madanappalli, Andhra Pradesh, died on 31st December, 1972 at her home in Denmark.

She took a prominent part in many TNAI activities during her stay in India from 1931 to 1956.