Believe it or Not . . . This I believe about

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR

By
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Nursing has grown into a profession and nursing education has become a speciality. Today's nurse is required to attain a certain level of technical competence and her role in the society at large, cannot be effectively played, merely on the basis of compassion. Thus we agree that higher professional preparation is required for the nurse. Her role in the health team in the hospital and in the community is becoming increasingly accepted and recognised.

No other profession is more humanitarian than nursing. Nurses have to deal with human beings in distress with painful problems. She deals not only with the patients but with their families and relations. The nurse today has come out of the hospital to the community, assuming an increased responsibility. This changed role brings her close to the society and the people.

However technically qualified a nurse may be, her acceptance in the society greatly depends on her professional behaviour. In this context, we may divide professional behaviour into two categories viz., (i) professional behaviour among the professional colleagues and (ii) with the patients and in the society at large.

While we give greater emphasis on the preparation of the nurse as a specialist, technologist and as an important member of the health team to function independently in her own right, it would be foolhardy to ignore the basic attributes of a nurse viz., compassion, spirit of service and devotion. I would still say that nursing is a vocation or a calling.

The need to develop the right type of attitudes in the nurse is equally important. When the nurse assumes the role of a specialist, there is a tendency to feel that the days of Florence Nightingale has gone. The spirit of service and devotion are the foundations on which Florence Nightingale had built this profession and without this foundation nursing will end up in a failure. The old values have a place and our success depends on giving it the rightful place. Our professional education should not be at the cost of the basic attributes of nursing. As the nurse is initiated to the profession she takes a pledge and repeats it at various occasions. She is also taught the ethics of nursing. What happens to them in her day to day professional practice ? The pledge and ethics are often forgotten and it takes the form of a ritual. We seem to fail to give due emphasis on the responsibilities of the nurse to the patients, to their relatives and to the institution she serves.

The patients and their relatives expect the nurse to be kind, sympathetic and honest. The society tends to blame her more readily when the nurse does not come up to these expectations. We must not forget that the nurse has to deal with the public more than anybody else in the health team. All of us have heard, at one time or other, our patients and public complain about the indifferent behaviour of nurses. This affects the image of the nursing profession as a whole.

Let us see now, what are the positive attitudes which a nurse should develop. A nurse should have qualities like kindness, understanding, consideration, and selfless dedicated service. Professional behaviour is really a reflection of professional attitudes. It has been said that attitudes are caught and not taught. So, we can contribute to the professional behaviour if the right attitudes are practiced and an atmosphere to learn this attitude is created in our institutions. Here the professional leaders have a great responsibility.

Jerard in his book "TRANSPARENT SELF", says : "If teachers no longer practice active personalized nursing care, but only preach about it, then, the students are likely to acquire the concept that teaching is the thing and nursing care is for flunkies.

British philosopher Bertrand Russel said : "Modern man has two kinds of morality, one which he but does not apply and another preaches, which he applies but does not preach."

What are some of the factors detrimental to the development of these positive attitudes ? One factor could be the environment where the nurses are trained since the environment has a great part to play in the formation of character and personality of a person. Another factor could be the present pattern of nurses' training. Many join nursing without the right motive of dedicated service. A third factor could be the present social changes in the society.

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seek help. Seeking and participating in medical care for health deviations is 'health deviation self-care' where the need for nursing intervention arises to return the individual to his self-care sufficiency. (11)

In nursing we are concerned with each individual patient coming out of a subculture with certain levels of role expectations and a set of values and goals and motivations for the achievement of those goals. Individuals evaluate advice according to their own matrix of culturally conditioned understanding. Health care innovations are accepted or rejected depending on their fit or conflict with the existing cultural patterns. If new material is interpreted in ways that do not violate established patterns it is more likely to be accepted. Ideas and methods which least affect the patients' habits, beliefs and values meet less resistance than those that attempt to alter existing behaviour patterns and values. Therefore, if the new concept of self-care can be introduced into the framework of the changing society and to the individual's ideas and beliefs about himself, it will serve the purpose of introducing the universal and health deviation self-care concepts.

A population of about 548 millions and 31,800 new mouths to feed everyday in India lead to many problems, over-crowding, malnutrition, sickness and unemployment. Besides these, the still prevalent joint family system in which the members do remain little boys for the major part of their lives, role of a wife serving her husband as lord and master, religious superstitions, caste barriers and economic limitations, limit the acceptance of the self-care concept in nursing.

Independent India is marching fast enough to break some of these barriers. The joint family system is gradually breaking up. The constitution of India has made explicit equal rights for both men and women. With the increase in the number of training institutions, health personnel and national health programmes and research, we can expect nation-wide changes with a changing society and a new set of goals in our communities. Concurrent with this transition in the outlook and goals of individuals and communities, we nurses should move in the direction of recognition of self and begin to learn of the self-care concept in the delivery of health care services so that we can spread the idea of self-care concept from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. This in turn, may act as a stimulus to each one to assume responsibility for his own self-care and that of his dependents to maintain health and prevent disease.

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Some of the factors which may promote the positive attitudes are :-

(1) Proper environment for the training of the nurses including the school, hostel and hospital facilities. (2) Changes in the pattern of training giving more emphasis on the need for the spirit of service and loyalty. (3) Responsibility of the senior members to give good examples. (4) A thorough understanding of the behaviourial services like psychology, sociology etc. (5) Planning and conducting certain courses like group dynamics, which will give an insight into the dynamics of human behaviour.

Pope Paul in one of his talks to the nurses said".....go on humbly and tenaciously with your work.....passion for study and scientific research, continuing the progressive updating of your culture and in the intellectual and moral vigour of your profession".

Professional behaviour can also be achieved by developing leadership. It appears to me that we lack good, professional leaders and nothing much is being done to develop leadership among nurses.

As everywhere else the generation gap is increasingly evident in the nursing profession. The leaders today do not take much initiative to prepare leaders for tomorrow and give them opportunities. Equally alarming is the situation that the younger generation in nursing is not showing sufficient interest in taking up leadership and the responsibilities that go with it. There is need for greater understanding to bridge this gap in the interest of the profession. Our professional behaviour with those in authority, those working at equal levels and those working under us or with us needs a change in outlook. The importance of discipline and respect for each other need not be over emphasised. Good leadership is an important factor in promoting good professional behaviour. Promotion of professional behaviour and leadership can be best achieved through the professional association. The T.N.A.I. should take this up as a challenging task.

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