

THE THEME :

"Nursing Students of the 70's"

By Miss C. Oonnie*

NURSING is a profession concerned with the promotion of the well-being of man in the society in which he lives. Nursing contributes preventive, educational, restorative and supportive services, which assist individuals, families and community in the promotion and maintenance of health. According to WHO Technical Report series No. 21 of the Expert Committee in Nursing, "In countries where medicine is highly developed, and nursing is not, the health status of the people does not reflect advanced stage of medicine." Nursing all over the world has been found as an essential requirement for a successful health programme.

Before we come to discuss about the theme for this Conference, i.e. NURSING STUDENTS OF 70's, it seems appropriate to look back to what nursing was like. Even up till the beginning of this century. Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern Nursing, had far reaching vision to point out that the destiny of nursing lies not in the care of sick, but also in the prevention of disease, and promotion of positive health. However, looking at the history of nursing in general, it is evident from the professional literature of the 19th Century, that nursing in the past was recognised chiefly in terms of personal qualities of the nurse such as devotion, obedience etc, and the scope of nursing was limited to Institutionalised care of the sick.

The nurse was more of a hand maiden to the doctor, helping him in medical care and healing procedures. Patients were considered as cases and nursing care was func-

tional in type consisting of routine procedures and techniques. At this stage, nursing education stressed on physical aspects, and medical care of patients, and the hospital schools of nursing more or less functioned as profit-making organisations with the nursing students serving a sort of apprenticeship exchanging rather a large amount of nursing service for an indifferent type of education. We in India still have many such schools existing.

In this day and age, one can no longer function as a nurse, merely on the basis of personal qualities, or for the sake of holding a job. Today the method of nursing is 'scientific' and its purpose 'social' i.e. the healthy growth and development of man. The hospitals are no more charitable Institutions meant for medical care, and cure, but social organisations for rendering personalised comprehensive care. Unlike in the past, nurses today function as participant members not only in the hospitals but also in the community. The aim of nursing as fore-told by Florence Nightingale is changing to promotion of health of the individual and the community.

This aim can be achieved only through accurate scientific knowledge about health and disease, on one side and the knowledge of community and its people on the other side. Nursing being a social activity, must fit into the culture of which it is a part. There are customs relating to sickness and death in all societies, and these include causes of sickness as well as preventive and therapeutic practices. The low level of health, high incidence of sickness, and high death rate in India are influenced by socio-cultural factors. Customs,

habits, overcrowding etc., are cultural reasons for ill health. It is not uncommon to find well-equipped hospitals, underutilised in some quarters in a country like ours with high morbidity rate. Even many of our primary health centres are still waiting to be popular. When we see mothers indifferent about bringing their children to well-baby clinics, we tend to feel that for all what they do not know, parents are the last people who should have children. but, these and many more such examples reflect on the influence of local culture on the acceptance or rejection of health measures. Further, it is even more noticed these days that problems presented by patients and families are not always purely medical but have a greater degree of social and moral involvements.

These trends call for a multi-disciplinary team approach to patient care. Thus, the recent advances in the fields of medical and social sciences, and the resultant changes in the society demands from the profession, a social approach to nursing.

The nursing students of the 70's will have to have a full appreciation of biological, behavioural and social science concepts, and the revision of nursing curriculum by Indian Nursing Council in 1965 incorporating elements of social sciences was but one step towards this aim. In our community-based health care system, we have a greater proportion of the total nursing personnel working in the community, and this being the trend, there is further need to loosen the hospital bias which is very predominant in our present system of nursing education and make it more broad-based and inter-disciplinary in a university setting. Graduates from such nursing programmes will be able to take with a challenge, the changing role of the nurse in Modern Health Services, and as good citizens and professional nurses, translate their technical knowledge to the individual, family and the community.

Medical science has given us more knowledge about individual

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illness than about family and community health. Specific treatment is often successful and more liberally provided, but comprehensive care is generally lacking. Even where essential knowledge of control and promotion are available, there are still important practical problems connected with the application of that knowledge at the community level. Much of what is known cannot be applied. Problems like anaemias of nutritional origin are widely prevalent among pregnant and nursing mothers. Nursing being one of the basic and highly practical professions, nurses have a great contribution in finding out new and workable methods of translating available knowledge into the reality of local setting. The need and scope for research in this field to help improve health standard of the community cannot be overemphasized. The future of nursing in developing countries like ours, lies in the field of prevention of disease and promotion of health.

There are countries highly advanced in health services where, the aim of basic nursing course is to care for his/her patients independently or in co-operation with other colleagues when available, will provide for a total nursing service. In some developed countries the trend is to expand the role of nurses to perform functions which in our part of the world would be done by a Doctor, e.g. treating minor ailments, testing of vision and hearing, holding clinics in areas of clinical specialisations and the like. This trend is so, partly because a 4-year degree course in nursing costs only one-tenth of the cost of preparing a doctor. Apart from economic point of view, it is also because, nursing services are much more easily accessible to the people than other health services. The heritage of nursing in many respects is different from medicine and other health professions. With the present trend of nursing gradually coming out of hospitals to the community, there are a great number of areas in the preventive and promotive services where nurses can function independently. With this recognition, the professional organisations today have an impor-

Business Session

Problems of Student Nurses

The General Committee of the Student Nurses Association met on the eve of the SNA Biennial Conference at Indore from October 17-20 to discuss the problems of Student Nurses. Thirty five members including Student Nurses and SNA Advisers (except from Orissa, A.P. and Tamil Nadu) attended the meeting.

The recommendations of the Committee which were later taken up at the Business Session of the Conference and presented before the TNAI Council were.

SYLLABUS & EXAMINATION

The outdated and obsolete nursing procedures in their syllabus should be replaced.

Students should not be sent for public health or domiciliary midwifery experience in rural areas unless safe and sanitary living accommodation and adequate learning facilities under constant supervision are provided.

Psychiatric Nursing for male nurses and midwifery for female nurses should not be compulsory for initial appointment as Staff Nurses as in Mysore State. They must be given the choice of other subjects like Tuberculosis Nursing, Paedia-

tric Nursing, V. D. and Public Health.

The new system of examination as recommended by INC in the revised syllabus of 1965 be followed in all schools and examination be conducted in the respective hospitals instead of selected centres.

LEAVE

Students should also be given special leave for attending professional Conferences which form part of educational experience.

They be given study leave or preparatory block for studies prior to the examinations.

STIPEND

The stipend for ANM and H.V. students be raised from Rs. 60/- to Rs. 150/- p.m.

DEPUTATION

When ANMs and H. Vs join the general nursing course, they should be treated as on deputation with full pay and allowances. The period for midwifery training be only for three months according to the INC syllabus. (In certain States the ANMs are required to undergo a further period of 6 months midwifery training).

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tant role in framing the network of the future of nursing service and nursing education in our country.

In the end, I would like to remind you that nursing was not created as an 'ideal' by Florence Nightingale. On the foundations already laid by her, we have to build ourselves as a dynamic force with its own special character and capacity to sustain itself, and transform itself into a self-contained profession along with other health professions. We shall not flourish in a fantasy world of resolutions if we do not flourish also in the world of reality. If we fail to keep pace with what is expected of nursing in the modern health care system, I am afraid our noble profession shall not remain a profession in the time to come.

It is you, young members of the profession, who form the vital link between the rich heritage of the past and the promises of the future. It is a bridge that must hold and to the nursing profession, student nurses are its most precious resource. We seniors become your advocates and you in adulthood become our representatives. You are large as your membership, which I am told is more than 21,000. You are wide because your association is widely distributed throughout the country within 18 State Branches of the TNAI. You are dynamic because you are young. It is in the fulfillment of the aforesaid educational and research challenges that the destiny of nursing lies in the world of tomorrow. This challenge I leave with you. □