

## A Pilot Study

# General Knowledge of Nurses

By Avinash C. Moudgil

NURSING EDUCATION is expanding at a tremendous pace. New colleges and courses are being introduced. But very little effort is being made to select the right type of candidates, candidates who have an aptitude for nursing. There are no standard pre-admission tests available. This results in the poor quality of candidates coming to the profession.

I conducted a pilot study in a very limited field of general knowledge. The candidates who sought admission to B.Sc. (Nursing) Post-Basic Course, were administered a test of general knowledge.

The general knowledge test was administered to 47 candidates—4 males and 43 females. All the candidates were trained nurses with at least 3 years experience of nursing service. They all had passed Pre-University examination or its equivalent.

Some candidates were in the final stage of graduation in general education. Some others had undergone a higher professional training such as Ward Sisters Course, Nursing Tutors Course, Public Health Nursing Course and Nursing Administration Course.

As for experience some candidates were holding the posts of Ward Sister, some of Nursing Tutor and Principal Tutor, some of Public Health Nurse and at least one of Nursing Superintendent. Their age range was between 25 and 45 years.

## The Test

The general knowledge test (Appendix I) was prepared in consultation with other teaching members of the faculty of the College of Nursing, PGI, Chandigarh. The first section (first 10 items) covers "Current Affairs" and the second section (last 10 items) covers "Sciences".

It was seen that "Chance Factor" favoured equally in ticking the correct choices. The time allotted for taking the test was 10 minutes.

## Results

It is interesting to note that on the first 10 items (Current Affairs) there were 256 responses but on the last 10 items (Sciences) there were 299 responses.

Does this preponderance of responses in "Sciences" section over "Current Affairs" section indicate the influence of basic nursing training?

Out of the 47 candidates only 11 gave correct response on item No. 5 (23%); only 14 on item No. 2

(30%); only 17 on item No. 20 (36%); only 19 on item No. 7 and 12 (40%); and only 21 on item No. 18 (45%). Items No. 5, 2, and 7 fall in the "Current Affairs" section, and items No. 20, 12 and 18 fall in the "Sciences" section. These are the six items (Nos. 2, 5, 7, 12, 18 and 20) on which less than 50% of candidates gave correct responses.

While scoring the test, one is intrigued by the choices made by the candidates of the different alternatives in each item.

Eight candidates (17%) did not score the items No. 8 and 12; seven candidates did not score item No. 18; six candidates (13%) did not score item No. 17 and 5 candidates did not score item No. 5.

While interpreting the results, one has to keep in mind the type of population which took this test. The items covered either the burning topics of the day or subjects which a trained nurse-cum-midwife is expected to have learnt. Items No. 2 and 5 and 8 were "hot news". Items No. 12, 18 and 20 form a part of the syllabus of the Diploma programme. Evolution, Blood circulation and Erythroblasts are not unfamiliar terms for a trained nurse. Still less than 50% candidates gave correct responses on these items. Does this indicate sub-standard training in the Diploma programme or poor motivation on the job or atrophy of knowledge or lethargic attitude of the candidate? How can one swallow that, out of 47, 8 trained nurses had not heard the name of Darwin; 7 trained nurses did not know as to who discovered blood circulation; 6 trained nurses-cum-midwives did not know what determined the sex of a human infant.

Another pointer is that this population seems to be away from the general stream of life. Out of 47 candidates, only 11 knew what was happening in U.A.R.; and only 14 knew the correct location of Mount Everest. Is it not sad that 8 candidates had not heard the name of Indian cricketer, Wadekar?

Interpreting the results from a different angle, out of 47 candidates, 32 candidates placed Mount Everest in India; 22 candidates gave a new lease of life to Nasser to declare him the President of U.A.R.; 19 candidates awarded the Defence Portfolio to Swaran Singh; 16 candidates did not bother to equate S.O.S. with "Save Our Souls"; 14 candidates made Shakespeare the author of "A Tale of Two Cities" and another 12 declared him the author of "A Pair of Blue Eyes"; 12 candidates made Geneva the Headquarters of U.N.O.; 10 candidates converted the Jumbo-jet into a tractor; and 9 candidates propped up Jawaharlal Nehru as the founder of Shantiniketan."

On the "Sciences" section of the Test, 22 candidates located Erythroblasts in blood; 19 candidates dubbed Darwin as revolutionary; 19 candidates propounded the function of Gall-Bladder as secretion; 17 candidates called William Harvey the discoverer of modern medicine; 9 candidates found vitamin A in citreous fruit; 8 candidates made fat the cause of protein malnutrition; 8 candidates declared that Zoology studies insects; 7 candidates imagined that the sex of human infant was

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determined by the age of parents and another 7 thought it depended on ovum.

### Conclusion

The ignorance of the candidates is bursting at the seams not only in the "Current Affairs" section, but also in the "Sciences" section, which they are supposed to have mastered in their Diploma programme and later on the job. The foregoing "narration" proves beyond doubt that these candidates possessed a very fertile imagination; but this too fertile imagination is nothing less than an exercise in futility. This dismal picture is the writing on the wall. The authorities that be, must heed it.

## APPENDIX I

### General Knowledge Test

Please (✓) the item you think is correct.

Time : 10 mts.

1. The Defence Minister of India is :  
(a) **Swaran Singh**  
(b) **Indira Gandhi**  
(c) **Jagjivan Ram**
2. Mount Everest is situated in :  
(a) **India**  
(b) **Nepal**  
(c) **Bhutan**
3. The Indian Constitution was adopted on :  
(a) **October 2**  
(b) **August 15**  
(c) **January 26**
4. The Headquarters of U.N.O. are :  
(a) **New York**  
(b) **Geneva**  
(c) **Paris**
5. The President of U.A.R. is :  
(a) **Lenin**  
(b) **Sadat**  
(c) **Nasser**
6. The founder of Shantiniketan was :  
(a) **Rabindernath Tagore**  
(b) **Jawaharlal Nehru**  
(c) **Rajindra Prasad**
7. Shakespeare is the author of :  
(a) **A Tale of Two Cities**  
(b) **A Pair of Blue Eyes**  
(c) **A Midsummer Night's Dream**
8. Wadekar is associated with :  
(a) **Cricket**  
(b) **Hockey**  
(c) **Tennis**
9. S.O.S. stands for :  
(a) **Goodbye till we meet again**  
(b) **Save our souls**  
(c) **I have found it**
10. Jumbo jet is a type of :  
(a) **Aeroplane**  
(b) **Tractor**  
(c) **Ship**
11. Zoology studies :  
(a) **Insects**  
(b) **Animals**  
(c) **Birds**
12. The name of Darwin is associated with :  
(a) **Revolution**  
(b) **Insulation**  
(c) **Evolution**
13. Vaccination provides protection against :  
(a) **Whooping cough**  
(b) **Diphtheria**  
(c) **Small pox**
14. Tuberculosis germs are transmitted by :  
(a) **Water**  
(b) **Personal contact**  
(c) **Uncooked meat**
15. Vitamin A is contained in :  
(a) **Green leafy vegetables**  
(b) **Potatoes**  
(c) **Citric fruit**
16. Protein calorie mal-nutrition is due to :  
(a) **Protein**  
(b) **Iron**  
(c) **Fat**
17. The sex of the human infant is determined by :  
(a) **Age of parents**  
(b) **Ovum**  
(c) **Spermatazoa**
18. William Harvey is known for :  
(a) **Discovery of wave length**  
(b) **Discovery of blood circulation**  
(c) **Discovery of modern medicine**
19. The function of Gall Bladder is :  
(a) **Secretion**  
(b) **Excretion**  
(c) **Storage**
20. Erythroblasts are found in :  
(a) **Bone marrow**  
(b) **Blood**  
(c) **Plasma**

(Key For Scoring—See Page 25)

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