

Nurses in the USSR

By Prof. I. N. Ussov*

Nurses in the Soviet Union get some privilege over others applying for admission to a medical college. Many nurses, after 2-3 years of service in a hospital, continue their education in the medical institutes and become doctors.

Nursing is a respected profession in the U.S.S.R. Nurses are, as a rule, highly cultured, very punctual in their work, kind and good-natured. They treat the patients with great love and earn respect from the patients and status in the society.

There are about 80 nurses per 10,000 people in the USSR and about 700,000 doctors (26 per 10,000 people). The para-medical workers—doctors' assistants, midwives, and nurses—exceed, 2,030,000.

The Soviet Union is a country where all medical institutions belong to the government and medical assistance is free for every citizen. The USSR has the largest number of medical workers, the doctor-population ratio being higher than that in the USA, Great Britain, France, Japan and other developed countries.

There are about 700 secondary medical institutions with 400,000 students. Medical schools, as a rule, are attached to big hospitals. Any citizen of the USSR between the age of 16 and 35 years with a complete secondary education is entitled to join such a school. Admission is by an entrance examination. Training of doctors' assistants and midwives in such schools lasts 3 years and for nurses the duration of the course is 2 years. At the end of studies the students take final examination and each of them is appointed to a job.

Tuition in medical schools is free and the students receive monthly grants from the government. Those who need are given accommodation in the hostels.

In medical schools much attention is paid to practical training of

students. Very often they work as nurses' assistants and at the end of the studies they have their professional practice, usually in the institutions where they would be absorbed.

After finishing medical schools nurses and other medical workers perfect their skill in everyday work of a hospital, polyclinic or dispensary, and regularly study at the refresher courses of medical schools while still in service or after discontinuing work. In such a way surgical nurses, nurses for physiotherapeutic rooms, for the wards of the newborn and other specialised departments are trained.

The nurse's wages depend on her qualification and the length of her work. The Council of Nurses in every hospital as well as the administration of the hospital attend to questions of the organisation of the perfection of skill of nurses.

NURSE-PHYSICIAN RATIO

In developed countries there may be one nurse to every 200 people, while in less developed countries the population per nurse may be 10,000 or higher.

The distribution of nurses differs from that of physicians. The number of nurses (including midwives and auxiliaries) to physicians varies widely from high figures like 11.0 for Guinea, 11.5 for Nigeria and 9.1 for Tunisia.

The lower figures are: 1.2 for Austria, 1.8 for the Federal Republic of Germany, 1.3 for India, 1.4 for Rumania, 2.2 for the USSR and 1.4 for Yugoslavia.

There are several developed countries with ratio of 2 or 3 to 1 and a number with higher figures—Australia 7.4, Canada 5.0, Denmark 4.7, England and Wales 5.3, Finland 8.0 and USA 5.9.

This last group provokes a question about international difference in practices and in the utilisation of nurses which the tables do not answer. It is clear that where physicians are scarce high ratio would be expected, since nurses help to spread medicine over a wider

population. But where physicians are not scarce high ratios must arise from more labour-intensive practices, and these may offer scope for economies. (WHO Chronicle, Dec. 71)

Our Population

The total population of India as on April 1971 was 547.9 million—Hindus; 453.2 million; Muslims 61.4 million; Christians: 14.2 million, Sikhs: 10.3 million; Buddhists: 3,812,000; Jains: 2,604,000 and others: 2,118,000. Nearly 36,000 people did not state their religion to census enumerators, most of them being presumably atheists.

The all-India growth rate over the 1951-61 decade stands at 24.8%. The rate of growth for Hindus is 23.69% (20.29%), the Muslims 30.85% (25.61) the Christians 32.6% (27.38), the Sikhs 32.28% (25.13) the Buddhists 17.2% (22.67) and the Jains 28.48% (15.17). (The figures in bracket shows the percentage of growth for the preceeding 10 years).

Females

The number of females per 1,000 males is the highest among the Christians—986. The corresponding figures for the Hindus are 930 (the same as all-India figure), Muslims 922, Sikhs 859, Buddhists 962 and Jains 940.

The Hindus account for more than 60% of the population in most of the states. In three southern states—Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh the Christians account for more than 66% of their population. In Punjab Sikhs constitute 60.22%.

Of the total population, 458 million live in the rural areas and 109 million in the cities and towns.

Nine Cities

Among the nine cities with a population of more than one million Calcutta tops with 7,031,382; Bombay 5,970,575; Delhi 3,647,023; Madras 3,169,930; Hyderabad 1,796,339; Ahmedabad 1,741,522; Bangalore 1,653,779; Kanpur 1,275,242 and Poona 1,135,034.

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