

Education For Nursing

By Mr. P.V. Prabhu*

ORGANISED Nursing Education was first started about 100 years ago in Bombay, Madras and Bengal when nursing training was an apprentice type of "on the job" training. Gradual changes took place through the years and the emphasis slowly shifted to the physical aspects of Nursing.

About 25 years ago, it was realised that the physical care of the patient was not all that was required. It was soon realised that the patient had to be considered as a human being belonging to a family, living in a community with its own culture and spiritual belief. The Indian Nursing Council prescribed a uniform syllabus for Schools of Nursing in India. Psychology, which helped to understand the man to a certain extent, and Public Health Nursing were integrated in the curriculum of Nursing. Stress was laid on the importance of nursing the whole patient, thus giving rise to what is known as comprehensive nursing.

In the earlier years Nursing and also Medicine started as empirical disciplines without any scientific basis. We are now in an era in which scientific basis for nursing is being developed. In our country today, majority of nurses are being prepared at the hospital-based schools of nursing whose number was 248 in 1970 according to INC statistics.

Though early schools of nursing in India was patterned on the type of such schools in the United Kingdom, we moved into University degree Education in nursing much earlier than the U.K. deriving inspiration from the USA. The two Colleges of Nursing viz., College of Nursing, New Delhi, and College of Nursing, Vellore, started degree programmes in nursing in 1946. On the whole

for some reason or the other, these two programmes did not command the support of the nursing profession. Though these institutions were known as institutions of higher learning, they retained some of the cultures and rituals peculiar to nursing, e.g. designating some of the teaching posts as 'Sister-Tutors'; retaining the capping ceremony—and initiating the student into the profession by administering professional oath while the student is still learning; and restricting to women only.

American Nurses have found that one reason why nursing could not attain its proper status was because of the predominance of women in nursing. Canada also has been appealing to High School boys to join nursing. Earlier organisers and administrators of collegiate education did not realise the importance of the need to create opportunities for diploma nurses to obtain degrees in nursing unlike in the USA and Canada. This is one of the causes which hampered the further development of collegiate education in India for nearly two decades.

At least now the institutions which have only basic four-year degree courses should make immediate arrangements to start degree courses for registered nurses.

It would encourage the educators to know that when the MBBS course was started provision was made for LMP holders to obtain MBBS.

Whenever one starts a new project one should try to enlist the support of the larger group of the profession. Nurses with diploma are still a large group and perhaps very powerful too. For the success of new programmes in nursing, it is essential to see that we get the support of the majority, if not of all, who count in the profession. If only the earlier leaders who started collegiate programme for preparing nurses had simultaneously started Post-Basic degree pro-

gramme for diploma nurses, at least 50% of the Schools of Nursing in India would have been closed by this time and in their place there would have developed not less than forty to fifty Colleges of Nursing in the country.

Nearly two decades passed after starting first collegiate programme for fresh candidates. To-day, there are fourteen Colleges of Nursing in India where degree courses in nursing are being conducted.

The idea of starting a Collegiate Programme for nursing education and closing the diploma schools can be very threatening to many nurses holding diplomas in nursing. Most of the nurses were not happy when the Health Directorate initiated planning to start a College of Nursing in Bangalore. They developed certain amount of fear that they may lose their importance and position. When we called applications from the nursing staff for admission to the College of Nursing in 1971, we had about 120 nurses who satisfied the University entrance requirement. The University of Bangalore has no age restriction for admission to the collegiate courses thus giving a chance to senior nurses to join the college. By this process, the fear of unknown has been completely eradicated and our collegiate programme have been backed by all nursing staff of the State. Fortunately there are evening colleges in Mysore State and employees can obtain PUC, BA and other degrees as private candidates.

Some youngsters doubt the ability of seniors to study. Research conducted in Kansas City has proved that aging at least between forty and sixty-five, does not result in decreasing mental or emotional flexibility. In foreign countries some people take up Doctorate studies after 50 years of age.

Nursing education should be built on a strong foundation by drawing upon the knowledge from social and behavioural sciences and physical and biological sciences. Depth study is needed in many of these. Yesterday's LMP Doctor was satisfied with a nurse with a Certificate in Nursing. To-day,
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*From an address by Mr. Prabhu, Principal, College of Nursing, Bangalore, at the Centenary Celebrations of Nursing Education in Tamil Nadu in Madras in July 1972.