

How Nursing Education can fit into the University Pattern

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES has come out with the statement that the basic education for the nurse is a planned educational programme that provides a broad and sound foundation for the effective practice of nursing and a basis for advanced nursing education. Any person by the title nurse should be a professional person who has had a broad preparation in behavioural sciences, biological sciences and physical sciences to give a firm foundation to the nursing sciences. Such a preparation is possible only in the institution of higher education of which a University is the ideal choice.

The W.H.O. expert Committee on Nursing has also recommended that the education of the nurse at basic and post-basic level be incorporated into the system of higher education of the country as rapidly as conditions permit.

Nursing is a dynamic therapeutic and educative process. It is practised with living human beings any time of the day or night with any type of physical or mental state of health. When a human being is well, physiologically, psychologically and sociologically the degree of his dependency for his health services from others is at a minimum. However, when he is not well, the degree of his dependency for the health services becomes inversely proportional to his well being. Nursing, being one of the health professions, renders its services through meeting the demands for assistance arising out of the varying dependency state of an individual.

This nursing care includes all personal comfort measures for the well-being of the person. It provides suitable nourishment, and

administers simple therapeutic measures to the person. It teaches the person to lead a normal life. It leads a person from a state of dependency to that of independence.

Nursing, like all professions, is both an art and a science. As a science it has an organized body of knowledge capable of being communicated from one individual to another. Like medicine and engineering it draws heavily on the basic concepts derived from the disciplines of social sciences, biological sciences and physical sciences. However, in order to develop a body of knowledge specific to nursing, emphasis is being laid on research in the practice of nursing.

As an art, nursing is practiced for the welfare of human beings of every caste creed and colour, living in all types of social environments, and institutions such as the family, school, industry or hospital. The high purpose of dedication and a continuing pursuit of excellence are typical of fine art.

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Among all other health professional workers, nurses are the only professional group which is at frequent, if not constant, attendance on a person or family. This is a great responsibility and presents a continuing challenge to the competence of the nurse. The physician prescribes a course of treatment but depends greatly on the assistance of the nurse for her observation and interpretation (report) in order to further plan his line of treatment for the person concerned. On the other hand the patient depends upon the nurse to interpret for him, to the physician and many others concerned, his signs and symptoms of illness or state of health. The

nurse has to exercise balanced judgement based on scientific knowledge and experience. She has to constantly establish priority and make decisions about the needs of the persons she serves. These needs may be physical and/or emotional in origin. The nurse has to be sensitive to identify the origin of the needs of the person without being told or having to ask too many questions. Her conceptualization of the person's needs will depend partly on the scientific knowledge, skill and values she brings into practice when dealing with these needs. Nursing is rendered to meet the needs of persons of all ages and states of well-being; nursing attempts to meet the needs of persons on a preventive basis and also on a curative basis at the time of physical illness or psychological trauma.

In recent years the artificial separation of the public health nursing and hospital nursing has been wearing off and an attempt to coordinate these two places of health care has been initiated. This has come about largely due to the recognition, than the practice of nursing, wherever it is done, is based on application of principles from the sciences.

With their broad educational preparation there is opportunity for nurses to add knowledge to the science of nursing and also to give professional service to the people, the care of whom presents a complex problem. These nurses have the potential ability to maintain essential records of their nursing practice which would be of documentary value for the future development of the discipline of nursing. The practice of nursing has to keep pace with the scientific advancement of the age and must be able to direct all attention to the care of the individual with a professional attitude.

Management or clerical functions are essential components of the machinery in the ultimate care to be given to a person, but that is not nursing. Nursing is what the nurse does to the individual during his state of dependency on her for his needs until he is helped to become independent and capable of taking care of his needs on his own. The value that the nurse places on human dignity has much to enhance or degrade the attitude she develops towards the style of her practice. Thus the correct attitude towards nursing transcends many obstacles and makes nursing into an art as well as science.

The educational needs for such a nurse are to be made at the level of a University. The problems, to a certain extent, arise from the nature of traditional hospital school programme which is isolated from any system of higher education and from their unsuitability with regard to the preparation of nurses for their work in modern health services. The facts inherent in the traditional hospital school system are that nursing education is given in the form of an on-the-job training, being paid for the services which places the students on an employer-employee relationship, and the patient a commodity. In this system of education the demands of service usually have priority over those of education. The very low status given to working women outside their home, and the low achievement in education among women continue to perpetuate a poor image of the nurse to our own people of this great country. This is both a perplexing and persistent problem facing the nurse educators.

One way out of this confounded situation is to upgrade the entrance requirements for schools of nursing to higher secondary level with a good percentage of marks and affiliate excellent hospital schools of nursing to the various universities. This will consequently set right the disparities and lacunae with regard to qualification of teaching faculty, requirement of students, and also help the required

standard of teaching facilities and enrichment of the curriculum as a whole.

Once the undergraduate programme for preparing basic nurses in our country is streamlined on par with accepted systems of higher education, the postgraduate programme will lend itself to preparing nurses for leadership position in teaching, administration and continue to practice in specialized areas of nursing.

At the basic level in a University there is a chance for an inter-disciplinary approach to the organization of nursing curriculum.

At the university level the idea of continuing education and part-time education, and extension service administration has a chance to be experienced.

Nursing Education could be on an extending continuum ranging from auxilliary nurse training to preparation at the doctoral level university faculty, top level administrators and researchers. Differentiation of function becomes a desirable and necessary corollary of the complex and rapidly changing society in which we live. The auxilliary training can be streamlined and included in the system of secondary education and the professional education streamlined into the system of university education. This step will put the nursing education in general on an educational continuum starting from 9th Class onwards. The students of the secondary school will have a certificate fit to continue university education as well as a certificate that will qualify them for employment.

Once this is done, while being employed, she could take part-time courses, evening college courses, and thus continue higher education, depending upon the individual's ability to pursue higher education.

By this set up the constant unnerving question of 'which is the best programme' would appear illogical to the person asking. It is not possible to make valid comparisons between unlike things. We need both the auxilliary and the

professional nurse. By recognising their essential differences in character and level of education the kinds of ability required for successful completion, the function for which each can and should prepare, we may be able to attract to nursing a much broader segment of the population than we are now doing.

In a free atmosphere of learning for the pursuit of knowledge, nursing studies and research work would begin to grow. This would, in turn, strengthen the undergraduate programme for the preparation of nurses.

Graduates of such a university programme are more likely to deliver the quantity and quality of nursing care needed in our dynamic free country.

If our national demands are for quality nursing and if our promising women folk are to come forward to give this high quality of care then the society must strive to strengthen the educational system of nursing under the auspices of university education.

General Education—

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provide a higher base of general education for the profession of nursing and a higher level of nursing and health orientation in the programme and curriculae of general education.

In the integrated programme the establishment of separate nursing institutions may become obsolete to a great extent and the present level of the training of nursing will become a part of a co-ordinated curriculum for the training of teachers. This will entail a reshaping and an expansion or establishment of separate wings attached to the Training College as is done in Western Countries.

In the Education Department, a health orientation of teachers' training will enhance employment opportunities, and the Health Department, on the other hand, will benefit from this integrated programme in the form of a larger turn-out of trained as well as better educated nurses.