

Industrial Nursing - Its Scope and Training

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INDUSTRIAL diseases are man-made diseases. Hence it is our bounden duty to reduce the incidence or prevent diseases arising out of a worker's job in an industry. Industrial accidents also take a toll which must be curbed.

A nurse working in an industry has to play her role in this. The problems and challenges that face her in an industry are many a times different from those of hospital nursing. In an hospital she has solely dealt with the sick and ailing. In Industry, this job is coupled with concern for the healthy worker. The study and control of factors which can affect the health and well-being of a worker while he is at his work, forms a large part of industrial medicine and nursing.

The factors injurious to a worker's health may be (1) Environmental, (2) Inherent.

Environmental factors are excessive heat, humidity, poor lighting (affecting eyes), poor ventilation (leading to dust diseases of lungs) and too much noise affecting mental stability).

Inherent factors are inherent in a particular process or in the material used in the process. For example, rise of silica in a process might expose the patient to silica dust and lead to silicosis of lungs. Yet another process might expose the patient to injurious fumes or gases (e.g. Acid fumes or toxic vapours of solvents)

A nurse in industry is required to have a knowledge of these factors in general and of these factors in the industry where she is working, in particular. For here she can play a useful part in giving suggestions regarding control of these factors and prevention of unnecessary suffering. She can also give help to a worker who comes with gas poisoning or electric shock. In her work if she finds that many workers from a department in her

industry are coming with the same ailment, she can help pinpoint the cause to some environmental or inherent factors. If this cause is located prevention becomes possible.

The role of a nurse in Industry can be thus summarized :

1. She assists the Medical Officer in the treatment of illness and injuries amongst workers and other staff.
2. She helps follow up treatment in appropriate cases.
3. She assists the Medical Officer in pre-employment examinations. These are done in most factories to ensure that only healthy and fit persons are employed. Also post-employment checkings are arranged from time to time for early detection of disease.
4. She takes active interest in factory hygiene and in prevention of accidents.
5. She helps keeping of records and reports
6. She gives first aid and emergency treatments if called upon to do so.
7. She can help in teaching First Aid to the employees. safety : (An unskilled worker handling a job for which he is not trained or a machine which is faulty or not properly guarded can cause accidents.)

Industrial accidents are most distressing. They may result in death or in loss of a limb or eyesight. They can and should be prevented. They are often due to human error. Very often the worker is blamed for his carelessness resulting in an accident. But supervisors, foremen and managers can also be responsible by neglecting their own duties.

Electricians and other maintenance staff can contribute to the accidents by neglecting to keep the machines in order. So the whole staff of the Industry needs to be

trained in the prevention of accidents and in safety methods.

The Industrial Nurse has to play a great role in this area. She visits the place of accident where an accident occurs and helps locate the cause. She can take part in giving training on safety methods, organizing safety contests, and providing safety slogans.

Welfare of workers

A Nurse can play a great part in the welfare of the worker. She should create confidence in the workers so that they can discuss their problems freely with her and she can help solve them.

Factory Law

It is necessary for a nurse to be a little conversant with the factory laws. In some industrial processes where hazardous material is used, it is compulsory by law to examine these people at fixed intervals. For these examinations factory inspectors are appointed by the health authorities or by the Government. They examine workers who are engaged in handling such jobs for early detection of the disease caused by these hazardous materials, e.g. T.E.L. which is used in petroleum industry. There are factory laws about how much working space a man should have and about ventilation and proper light, and sanitary facilities. Of course, these questions do not arise in big factories because they are designed in such a way that all these factors are taken into consideration before.

At present we do not have much facilities for training in industrial nursing in India. In London, the Royal College of Nursing gives an 8-month diploma course in occupational health nursing. Fourteen years ago when I took this course we were given lectures on Industrial Nursing by a tutor who herself was an Industrial Nurse. A doctor who had studied industrial medicine also gave lectures on different diseases in industry and their treatment. Lectures were given on the social pattern of that country and their laws. Some lectures were on psychology of industrial workers.

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