

Some academic details of

Diploma in Psychiatric Nursing at A.I.I.M.H. Bangalore

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The All India Institute of Mental Health offers a one-year Diploma in Psychiatric Nursing Course. The programme has recently been reorganised. Some of the objectives and details on its academic aspects are outlined in this article.

The faculty of psychiatric nursing at the Institute believes that the concepts used in the care of the mentally ill should be dynamically oriented. This is necessary since the core of psychiatric nursing is the mutual interaction between the nurse and the patient in a given situation. In this interaction, the maladaptive behaviour of the patient is the unique element. To be effective a psychiatric nurse is required to be knowledgeable in the psychodynamics of behaviour and be conversant with communication skills, problem-solving skills, recreational and occupational skills. She is also required to have a good theoretical background of the social sciences, humanities, physical sciences and the principles of psychotherapy. Above all, the understanding of herself for the nurse is absolutely to understand the variety of human behaviour and to develop the inter-personal relationship with the patient.

The goal of nursing education, in general, is to develop 'independent thinkers, creative professionals and change agents' (Zurhellen). These goals hold good for any professional education and the various teaching-learning processes used at the Institute are directed to achieve this goal. The primary objectives of the training are to equip the nurse with the know-how to recognise and to prevent mental illness and to promote mental health.

The nurse-trainee is assisted to accept and to carry out responsibilities of the care of the mentally ill through understanding of behaviour and through the use of interpersonal interaction skills. The training also facilitates the nurse to (i) develop and accept her own philosophy of psychiatric nursing, (ii) understand the process of normal growth and development, (iii) understand the dynamics of human behaviour, (iv) gain knowledge of classifications etiology symptomatology, treatment and prognosis of mental disorders, (v) develop skills in communication and interpersonal relations, (vi) supplement her knowledge of neurological disorders and the care of such patients, and (vii) to be conversant with the legal aspects of psychiatry. The training also aims at helping the nurse to understand her own behaviour and to develop appreciation of her role in the psychiatric team. An effort is also made to let her understand and integrate the basic principles of psychiatric nursing in other areas of nursing.

SELECTION AND ORGANISATION OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Pre-clinical Period (Six Weeks)

Keeping in view that an average nurse after Certificate Course in India has an inadequate background of behavioural sciences, this period is devoted to courses in Effective Study Habits, General Psychology, Sociology, Mental Health, Mental Hygiene and introduction to psychiatric nursing.

The student spends more time in the classroom and library only 12 hrs/wk in the clinical field in the mornings with selected patients, under close supervision of the

tutors to assist her to get adjusted in the new setting.

The group conferences in the ward encourages the student to express her fear and anxiety related to working with mentally ill patients, to share her ideas with her peer group and clarify her doubts with the tutors. During this period student is asked to maintain a daily diary, writing her observations and expressing her emotional reactions frankly and putting forward her difficulties in adjustment without hesitation. This diary makes the basis of individual conference with her tutor for her individual problem.

Clinical Period

First Term

This follows the preclinical period. In theory, the lectures in Developmental Psychology, Social Psychology, and Abnormal Psychology are continued in that sequence. Clinical—Psychiatry is introduced and lectures in psychiatric nursing are intensified. Besides the lectures, films on Growth and Development, Mental Mechanisms and Nurse-Patient—Relationship are shown and discussed to reinforce learning in the classroom.

The clinical field experience in the mornings is provided for 24 hrs/wk with patients in open wards family wards, Out—Patient—Department, Occupational Therapy Department and children's ward. During this period one-to-one relationship is developed by the student with a patient. The student starts writing process recording with this patient to learn communication skills and to understand patient's and her own behaviour.

On-going Pre- and Post-Conferences in the ward are the most important method to correlate different learning experiences. Pre-conference of half an hour each day relates to application of theoretical learning and Post-conferences for another half an hour relates to a significant nursing, personal or group problem a student may

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bring. In both these conferences the student is encouraged to discuss their own point of view and to stimulate group thinking in reaching a solution. Student also writes nursing care plans on each assigned patient regularly and submits one nursing care study towards the end of first term.

The objectives of learning experience in each area are discussed with students at initial stages of experience and they are encouraged to evaluate themselves at the end of the experience whether they have achieved the objectives. This is to assist the student to examine herself objectively since self understanding is basic to skills of psychiatric nursing.

The first term follows by Summer Holidays for two weeks.

Second Term

In theory, Neurological nursing and Community Psychiatry are introduced. Psychiatric nursing including community mental health nursing are continued. The methods of teaching utilised during this term are mostly socialised, e.g. Panel discussions, Seminars and Role play etc. The students are encouraged towards independent study and develop their own reference material from the library. Students are also assigned to group projects to work with and through other members of the peer group.

The clinical practice remains to be 24 hrs/wk but now with acute and chronic patients in the close wards. Emphasis is laid on nursing the group of patients. Group dynamics and nursing care in social setting are put into practice. Process-recording, nursing care plans, nursing care Studies and Pre and Post-conferences are continued as clinical methods of teaching. The field visits are made to the Institute related to Community Mental Health and to State Mental Hospital, Madras.

During this term students are placed in Neuro Centre for four weeks to learn about neurological problems. For one week students

work in Old People's Home to get oriented to problems associated with old age.

By end of this period most of the students appear more relaxed, free in their opinion, more cooperative; understanding and accepting of others and display increasing self understanding.

Internship Period

At the end of the entire course the student is provided Internship practice for 48 hrs/wk for four weeks, to assist the student to develop confidence in accepting and carrying out responsibilities of staff-nurse in the ward during day and night shifts. Here the student faces variety of patient and administrative problems which she attempts to solve by making best use of the available resources and recognising and accepting limitation of her working situation.

EVALUATION

The knowledge in psychiatric nursing and related subjects is evaluated through regular class tests after each unit is completed, the result of these tests and selected reading assignments through out the year contributes 30 per cent of internal assessment towards final examination in theory.

Skills in observation, communication and problem-solving methods are evaluated through process recording, nursing care plans and observation of the student during group conferences and in actual contact with the patient, his family and staff members.

Attitude and interest of the student are evaluated through observing her while she participates in daily conferences, group projects and her attitude towards herself, profession, and patients.

For the clinical area an evaluation guide is used by the nursing faculty, which covers the areas of knowledge, skills, attitude and interest. This guide is discussed with the student in the beginning of the clinical period and she is encouraged to evaluate herself be-

fore the tutors discuss it with her periodically.

CONCLUSION

Psychiatric nursing course draws heavily from behavioural sciences and correlates what is drawn from these disciplines into psychiatric nursing. By doing this, the students are given broader foundation on which to plan, give and evaluate effective care to individual or group of patients in the hospital or community. The programme encourages the student to question, to discuss, to debate if necessary to clarify any point of doubt. It has been noticed towards the end of the course, an average student appears to be more tolerant, patient relaxed and free in her expression. Most of them display positive attitudes towards themselves, profession and the mentally ill patients. The Faculty has attempted to apply educational principles to facilitate learning and to assist the student to modify her personality.

Nurses who possess basic emotional stability, intellectual curiosity, warm and out-going personality should consider to specialise in psychiatric nursing, because this speciality needs lot of quick thinking, giving of one's self and emotional control on the part of the nurse.

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