

How to Cope with Professional Challenges

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A PROFESSION is an occupation based on specialised intellectual study and training, the purpose of which is to supply skilled service with ethical components to others, for a definite fee or salary¹. But according to Professor Butts, profession is the mastery of a common body of knowledge and skill and to attain this, years of supervised study, learning and practice at a University level is necessary².

Nursing is an art and a science dominated by an ideal service in which certain principles are applied in the skilful care of the sick in appropriate relationship with the physician and with others who have related responsibilities. It is concerned equally with the prevention of disease and conservation of health. Skilful care embraces the whole person—body, mind and soul, his physical, mental and spiritual well being.

Stella Goostrey rightly points out that Nursing has limitless untapped strength and resources in the profession, citizens, agencies in the community for the advancement and improvement of nursing education and organized nursing services, provided we approach the problems as a unit rather than a specialized segment³. Indeed the nurse working through her professional and non-professional organizations has already done much. But still many challenges have to be met to increase the body of knowledge, which should be extended by united efforts of medicine and nursing together⁴.

Today, nurses must be encouraged as never before with a zeal so that they can cope with all the professional challenges and share worthily in profession, community, national and world affairs. The respect and dignity which is so obviously expected by nurses has to be developed with great rapidity. Therefore, there is need to know the awareness of challenges of nursing profession among nurses. Thus the present study was conducted.

Background of the Study

This study was conducted at the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research, Chandigarh. Seventy-five registered nurses of three categories responded to questions relating to professional criteria of nursing, the challenges to be met and how to cope with these

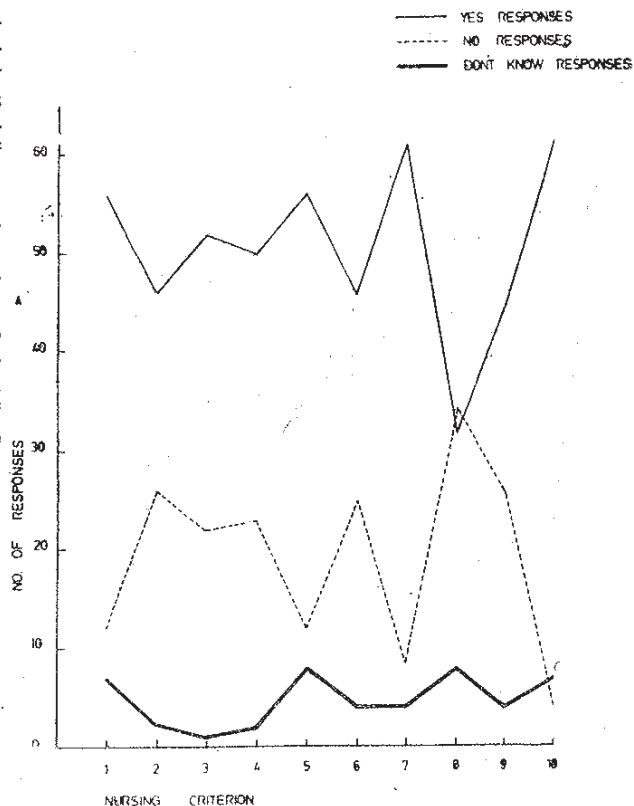
challenges. Each category had 25 nurses of B.Sc. Nursing, Post-Basic, who had just completed one semester (Group I); who had studied for three semesters (Group II); and who had done only diploma in nursing and midwifery (Group III).

Thirty six nurses were in the age group of 25 to 30, and 39 were above 30 years. Thirty five nurses were married and 40 unmarried. Most of them belonged to different States of India, i.e., West Bengal, Orissa, Punjab, Kerala, Haryana, Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, except a few from Nepal and Bangladesh. Thirty of them belonged to rural and 45 to urban areas. Thirty-two had professional experience up to 5 years whereas 24 had experience of 6 to 10 years and 19 had more than 10 years' experience.

Purpose of the Study

(1) To find out the awareness among nurses regarding the criteria of a profession; (2) To get

Responses
of three groups of registered nurses



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the opinion of registered nurses regarding challenges to be met and techniques in nursing profession.

Technique

Based upon the criteria of nursing profession listed by William Shephard⁵, a questionnaire was drafted. The subjects were directed to respond appropriately against each question by indicating a tick (/) mark to three point scale.

In the second section of the questionnaire open-ended questions were asked about the

challenges to be met in nursing profession. They were asked to list them in a priority order and also give the mechanics to meet those challenges.

Results and Discussion

The positive responses of 75 registered nurses were 65.49 per cent followed by 28.38 per cent negative and 6.13 per cent were not aware of these criteria (Table I). (Graph shows the curve).

Majority of them (64) felt that there was a code of ethics in the nursing profession (Criterion 10). Twentytwo of them were of Group I and 21 each of Groups II & III.

The second highest number of nurses, i.e., 62 felt themselves as useful members of the society, getting respect from society and thought that the profession was helpful in their personal development (Criterion 7). Twentyone each of Groups I & II and 18 of Group III agreed with this criterion.

Fiftysix felt that they are able to satisfy the society and the profession was based upon socially accepted principles (Criterion 1). Twentyone of them were of Group III and 18 and 17 of Groups I & II, respectively.

In all 55 nurses agreed with Criterion 5 that the nursing programmes did have emphasis upon scientifically developed techniques. Twentyone of them belonged to Group III whereas 17 nurses each were of Groups I & II.

Only 52 nurses felt that they had adequate duration of nursing education programme (Criterion 3). Twentytwo of them were of Group III whereas only 15 each were of Groups I & II, respectively.

Fifty nurses agreed with Criterion 4 that there was adequate emphasis on skill training in the programmes which they had undergone. Nineteen of them were of Group III followed by 16 and 15 nurses of Groups I and II respectively.

Fortysix nurses felt free for initiatives, were allowed to perform nursing activities independently, got opportunities for decision making in patient care and ward management, and freedom to make judgement in patient care (Criterion 6). Eighteen nurses of Group I, 17 of Group III and 14 of Group II agreed with this criterion.

Fortysix nurses felt that pre-professional preparation and opportunities to participate in cultural activities were adequate (Criterion 2). Sixteen of them belonged to Group III whereas 15 and 14 to Groups I & II, respectively. Twenty-six nurses did not agree with this criterion.

Almost equal number of nurses gave positive and negative responses for Criterion 8. Thirty-four of them hesitated to participate actively in

TABLE I
RESPONSES OF 75 REGISTERED NURSES FOR THE
CRITERIA OF A PROFESSION

Sr. No.	Criteria	Responses		
		Yes	No	Don't know
1.	A profession must satisfy an indispensable social need and be based upon well established and socially accepted scientific principle.	56	12	7
2.	It must demand adequate pre-professional and cultural training.	46	26	3
3.	It must demand the possession of a body of specialized and systematized knowledge.	52	22	1
4.	It must give evidence of needed skills which the public does not possess; that is, skills which are partly native and partly acquired.	50	23	2
5.	It must have developed a scientific technique which is the result of tested experience.	55	12	8
6.	It must require the exercise of discretion and judgement as to time and manner of the performance of duty. This is in contrast to the kind of work which is subject to immediate direction and supervision.	46	25	4
7.	It must be a type of beneficial work, the result of which is not subject to standardization in terms of unit performance or time element.	62	9	4
8.	It must have a group consciousness designed to extend scientific knowledge in technical language.	33	34	8
9.	It must have sufficient self-impelling power to retain its members throughout life. It must not be used as a mere stepping stone to other occupations.	45	26	4
10.	It must recognize its obligations to society by insisting that its members live up to an established code of ethics.	64	4	7

professional organizational activities whereas only 33 did not hesitate.

Fortyfive nurses felt that they got adequate opportunities for promotion, higher education and in-service education and got guidance in job performance and personal matters impelling them to remain in the profession throughout life (Criterion 9). Only twenty-six nurses did not agree with this criterion.

In response to an open-ended question regarding challenges to be met in nursing, majority of them, i.e., 31 nurses, pointed out that social acceptance was most challenging whereas 11 of them gave priority to better working conditions, job security and physical facilities. Eleven nurses emphasised upon independent functioning of the profession in the hands of nurses and not under the medical profession. This, they thought, would provide them self-confidence and better status. Some nurses also mentioned that conducting research, counselling, raising the standard of education, unity among nurses and some of the specialized fields like paediatrics, neurology, community health and primary health care were challenging to nursing. It suggests that a mechanism has to be worked out to cope with these challenges to survive with status in the everchanging medical world.

Out of 75 nurses 20 showed their ignorance regarding the meaning of the profession and awareness of the challenges. Most of them belonged to Group III. The level of their preparation and experiences in the profession may be the cause of their ignorance.

Only 20 nurses suggested that in-service education, increasing knowledge through higher studies, better supervision and making society aware of the profession will help in coping with these challenges. The mastery over the professional skill can be achieved only through short training courses, seminars, workshops, symposia, educational fares, educational tours, exhibitions, demonstrations by experts, academic discussions and refresher courses. In the absence of such educational and professional training, a nurse is prone to commit serious pedagogical blunders, for which guidance in job performance and personal matters is suggested.

The nurse must possess a strong sense of vocation and true devotion towards patient care. There should be adequate provision for promotional opportunities. At the same time a nurse must consider nursing as a calling and not a trade or business. She must not oscillate and make nursing as a stepping stone to other professions.

Bixler emphasises strongly that the profession constantly enlarges the body of knowledge and improves its techniques of education. Therefore, nursing programme should utilize and

encourage research activities and emphasise upon scientifically developed techniques. Nurses should not hesitate to participate actively in professional activities.

The nurse must have essential qualities to be tactful, efficient, affectionate, cooperative, healthy, enthusiastic and responsible. To meet the challenges of nursing profession of today a nurse must prepare with missionary zeal because there always must be a forward march, because new times demand new measures and one should continue advancing to cope with new challenges.

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