

The Psychiatric Nurse

Therapeutic Roles

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The author shows here that the developing of the skills of psychiatric nurse depends on learning as much as possible about the patient, his illness and the helping role of the nurse. If the nurse is able to offer the patient a possible emotional experience the nurse can be the most significant therapeutic influence in the patient's hospital experience.

ONE of the most important responsibilities of the Psychiatric Nurse is to create an environment that will provide opportunities for patients to establish positive relationships with individuals and groups by developing a warm, homelike, accepting atmosphere in the ward or unit.

The reality of any situation is always a good basis upon which to develop an approach to any behavioural problem involving a mentally ill patient.

Patients need nurses who understand their own emotional reactions and who can analyse the situation, determine how their emotions may contribute to the situation, and identify the contribution made by the patient's feelings. The nurse learns to understand that rejection on the part of the patient is one experience of the mental illness from which the patient is suffering.

The nurse cannot expect to thoroughly like all patients, neither can the nurse expect all patients to genuinely like her. The nurse can expect to develop some understanding of all patients. Consistency in approach to patient care helps lessen patient's anxiety by simplifying decision making and by avoiding uncertainties.

A nurse can be one of the most significant therapeutic influences in a patient's hospital experience because the nurse spends more time with the patient than does any other professional worker. Thus the 24-hour daily living activities of the patient provide the unique opportunity which makes it possible for the psychiatric nurse to make a distinct contribution.

Patients who live together in hospital units may react toward each other somewhat as family members. The nurse's role as a parent substitute offers an opportunity to provide patients with healthy emotional relationships. It is important to realise that the therapeutic role of the nurse concerns itself with the patient's problems of reality which deal with here and now and there is no more important task than listening to a patient in a

positive, dynamic, sympathetic way without at the same time giving advice stating opinion, or making suggestions.

Positive Experience

The nurse may be able to offer the patient a positive emotional experience which can substitute for one in which the patient has never before been able to share. Thus the nurse has a role as a teacher in helping the patient learn to deal in a more mature way with inter-personal relations and group living.

Developing the professional skills of a Psychiatric Nurse depends upon learning as much as possible about the patient, his illness, and the helping role of the nurse as it specifically applies to the patient.

Effective performance in Psychiatric Nursing does not require unique personality attributes or abilities, but it does demand that emphasis be placed upon accepting and understanding self and others and the ability to relate positively to others. However, until the nurse is able to cope with personal fears and anxieties in relation to Psychiatric Nursing, it is unlikely that she can become a therapeutic influence in the patient's environment.

Many authorities believe that psychiatric nurses can be of little real therapeutic help to mentally ill patients unless they become involved in a mature emotional relationship with them. It is essential for the nurse to have a clear concept of the meaning and significance of a mature emotional environment.

Let us look at this statement a bit more clearly. The condition of inner conflict between what we want and what we have, what we would like to do and what we are permitted to do, how we feel and how we are supposed to feel, does not end at maturity. But with maturity comes increased ability to adjust to the demands of profession.

It is desirable and constructive to be familiar with our own feelings, our own attitudes, beliefs, prejudices so that we can prevent them not from entering into our interaction with someone, but from interfering with the help we are giving.

Group Varieties

In other words, unless the nurse understands her own feelings and motives, she may err; she may do it in the direction of being too sympathetic or overprotective or too warm, or in the opposite direction of being disdainful, rejecting,

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hostile or cold. A nurse must be able to accept the differences in nursing attitudes, behaviour patterns and value of a great variety of cultural, social, educational, and national groups.

As a mature professional person she must be able to accept the right of all of them to be different, to behave differently, to think and feel different from the way she is and feels. The ability of a nurse to recognise emotional needs, and to satisfy them in others is based on her understanding of how individuals develop, what methods they use in their efforts to adopt to life, what responses they produce in their struggle with conflicts, and an insight into her own role in interpersonal relations.

A professional relationship focuses upon the personal and emotional needs of the patient to the exclusion of the needs of the nurse. Acceptance breeds acceptance, acceptance makes possible understanding, understanding promotes co-operation, without which nurses cannot function effectively. Applied to patient care this con-

cept is of vital importance.

To sum up, although the nurse does not work alone or without direction, the nurse may be the most significant person with whom the patient has a relationship during his hospital experience. In all therapeutic relationships the nurse must recognise the patient as a unique, important human being, who, like all persons, experiences, hopes, fears, joys and sorrow, and has his own special set of problems and reactions to life. The patient must be treated as an individual and important persons and not as a diagnostic entity or a set of psychiatric symptoms. Thoughtful attention should be given to terminating relationships with patients when it is necessary for the nurse to leave the unit where she has worked with them.

The psychiatric nurse spends most of her time on the wards during her training and is an important member of the medical team. Helping patients to accept themselves and to improve their relationships with other people is probably the most fundamental goal in Psychiatric Nursing.

Winners of 3M Nursing Fellowships 1983

Kelesitse Tiale of Botswana, Sung-Sill Kim, Korea, and Audrey Yoke Lin Tang, Singapore, are the winners of the three ICN/3M Nursing Fellowships for 1983. Announcement of the winners was made on March 3, when the ICN Board of Directors approved the report of the Selection Committee.

The value of each of the fellowships is US \$7,500. The fellowship programme, sponsored by the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M) Company and administered by ICN, also includes a prize of US \$200 for each of the national finalists. Each of ISN's 95 member associations may put forward the name of one candidate each year for the international awards. A total of 50 national nurses associations submitted the name of a candidate for the 1983 awards.

Kelesitse Tiale, Botswana is Assistant Principal Tutor, School

of Nursing, Gaborone, Botswana, and is moderator for the Nurses' Examination Board. She intends to use her fellowship for studies leading to a master's degree in education at the University of Botswana.

Sung-Sill Kim, Korea is Professor at the only School of Nursing in Gang Weon, the largest province of Korea, and is area director of the Korean Nurses Association.

Ms. Kim will use her fellowship for doctoral studies in nursing science, concentrating on community health nursing, at the Graduate School, Yonsei University. Upon completion of her studies Ms. Kim will be the first nursing educator in Gang Weon province with a doctoral degree.

Audrey Yoke Lin Tang, Singapore, holds the position of Nursing Officer in Singapore and is responsible for the administration and nursing of a 73-bedded ward of acute and high dependency care patients in a surgi-

cal discipline.

With the ICN/3M fellowship she will study for her Bachelor of Applied Science degree at the Lincoln Institute of Health Science, College of Nursing, Melbourne, Australia. She will major in nursing administration.

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