

Occupational Health Nursing in an Industrial Complex

Ms. ALEYAMMA JACOB

OCCUPATIONAL Health Nursing is an application of Nursing principles to protect the health of the workers and preventing accidents in their occupational hazards. It involves prevention, recognition and treatment of illness, injury, requires special skill and knowledge in the fields of health education, counselling, environmental-health and rehabilitation.

Role of Occupational Health Nurse

The Occupational Health Nurse is a professional who works independently and co-operatively as a member of an occupational health team. She adapts and applies Public health principles and environmental health practices. She has to participate in activities to meet the needs of the employees and of the organizations.

She carries the responsibility for the administration of the occupational health programme including the planning, implementation and evaluation of the service provided for workers with industrial medical officers, industrial hygienists, toxicologists, medical technologists, work physiologists, audiologists, medical social workers, statistical managers, records maintaining staff, computer staff and safety personnel. She often co-ordinates the medical and environmental aspects of the occupational health programme wherever her expertise is required. She also provides Nursing care for workers attending Out-Patient Department.

Her therapeutic and curative function is at times to provide emergency care for workers suffering major injuries or acute medical conditions. She must be capable to identify the health problems and give immediate appropriate Nursing care and recognise when it is necessary to refer a problem and how to involve the other members of the occupational health team, when there is specialised skills and understanding is required to handle the problems presented.

She must have ability to identify the hazards and its origin of establishment which are harmful to workers for their health and safety. She should investigate to see if all the people with the symptoms worked in the same department and are involved in same process. When she sees any relationship between the work environment and the workers' symptoms, she brings this to occupational physicians' notice and other occupational health professionals with whom she works. She must be familiar with

common symptoms of early industrial intoxication. Keeping alert to the new process and use of material is also essential. She must understand and appreciate the importance of production and the inter-relationships of departments in an organization. Health education should be given to the employees for prevention of disease and to protect their health properly.

Every action of the occupational health nurse influences the workers' attitude towards the health and safety.

Finally, it is essential that the occupational health nurse understands the purpose of occupational health records system. Information recording should be correct, complete and confidential. In order to be a good occupational health nurse what is required is a sound knowledge of occupational health practice, application of Nursing principles in protecting the workers' health.

Industrial Medical Centre in Neyveli

Neyveli Lignite Corporation, an industrial complex, consists of open cast mines, Thermal Power Stations, Fertilizer Plant and Briquetting and Carbonization plant employing over 20,000 people of different categories. There is 350-bedded multi designed Industrial General Hospital which is to be expanded to 500-bed strength, to give medical care for all employees, their families and dependents. To ensure that the employees keep their health fit, right from recruitment to retirement a well planned Occupational Health Centre is there in our Industrial Hospital called Industrial Medical Centre. Since 1966 onwards it was functioning but started to function methodically in 1983 onwards, with well-equipped departments manned by trained personnel.

Situation in Industrial Hospital

The Occupational Nurse :

1. Assists the Physician in medical examination of the employees like recording blood pressure, vision, physical fitness, etc.
2. Assists the Industrial Medical Officer during his visits to the occupational health centre in industrial units, pays special attention to occupational health problems.
3. Maintains medical records.
4. Maintains Discipline.
5. Keeps records of physical test, lung function test, audiogram, vision screening, etc.
6. Guides working women in solving their health problems.
7. Medical counselling with chronically ill patients.
8. Managing of medical emergency, periodic visit to first aid centre.
9. Participates in health education of first-aid training.
10. Conducts specific health surveys of working population.

The author is Occupational Health Nurse, Industrial Medical Centre, Neyveli Lignite Corporation, Neyveli.

Activities of IMC

1. Surveillance of working of health, pre-employment, periodical medical examinations, and health surveys. 2. Monitoring of working condition—providing industrial hygiene and toxicology. 3. Health education—increasing level of awareness and the general level of occupational health. 4. First-Aid training. 5. Standing Medical Board to solve the dispute arising out of medical fitness, industrial accidents, compensation, etc.

Ongoing Programme in IMC

Health Survey of 20,000 Employees : A thorough medical check-up of 18,500 employees was done during the year 1984-85. Suitable treatments were given to inflicted employees and proper instruction and pamphlets given regarding the diet, drug, exercise, etc. The survey will be done once in 6 months for those employees who are working in hazard-areas, like X-ray Department, Operation Theatre, food handlers, welders, etc.

Noise-Survey : Noise has become an important stress factor. Wide-ranging disorders are produced due to exposure to noise. The noisy industrial environment is the prime cause for noise induced hearing loss among workers. To provide a safety environment for the maintenance of the better health of employees in noisy area, we have started the audiogram survey of the those employees who are working in Thermal Power Station-I, where the machines' noise will be more. We screened 350 employees, executives, non-executives and the programme continues. Affected cases are referred to ENT specialist for giving treatment.

Dust Survey : Dust level from the industrial hygiene point of view is investigated by Centre for Applied Research and Development. The particles below 0.5 microne and less are responsible for health hazards. A health survey has been done for all mining employees. Health survey has not revealed any serious disease like Pneumoconiosis, Silicosis, etc.

Industrial Hazard Survey : To reduce the number of accidents in the industrial area, especially in the mines, a study is being done with the help of the

plant people. A committee consists of mines officers and medical staff constituted to study the cause of accidents. Safety measures were taken by them to prevent the accidents in future.

Health Survey of Working Women : The aim of the survey is to reduce the infant mortality rate due to lack of breast feeding and care of the children to improve the health condition of working women and early detection of cancer cells. So far we screened 400 employees out of a total strength of 1000. 4-5 women employees are examined daily. Simultaneously we are conducting a survey to study about their working environment, social life, family problems. For a case study in future, every women is asked to fill up the proforma, 340 ladies underwent the papsmear test, D & C done for doubtful cases in ladies and some did not reveal any cancer disease but treatment was given for mild infections.

Specific Surveys : A health survey for rehabilitating the chronic alcoholics in our corporation has been done and 45 candidates were thoroughly studied. They were from all categories including office staffs, technicians, operators, industrial workers, etc.

The result of the survey reveals that 60% of the persons screened were suffering from alcoholic neuritis and 35% from Hypertension. It is noted that 91% of them acquired these from their friends.

A planned programme was suggested to reduce this anti-social habit which includes psychiatric treatment, neurotic therapy and help from the paramedical staff to guide them properly.

Health Education for School Children

First-Aid classes are being conducted not only for employees but also for school children. 950 employees and school children were given first aid training certificates issued during 1984-85. This is to make them fit whenever the emergency arises.

Dental Survey : Every year, we are conducting dental survey for school children and prizes are given to those who keep good dental care.

For conducting all these studies occupational health nurse is performing an important role. She has to prepare and submit the report of these studies to the Head of the Department for necessary action.

Perspective on Industrial Nursing

(Continued from page 307)

and victims of drug abuses.

5. Effective participation in sustenance of health records.

6. Active acquaintance and familiarity with the industrial plant environment and its hazards through periodic industrial visits.

7. Assisting the industrial physician with the various in plant and field activities.

8. Acquaintance and knowledge about workman-related industrial laws and folders to be kept as a reference in rehabilitative procedures and industrial accidents.

9. Delivering the key role in the Health education

programmes.

10. Should initiate and organise in-plant emergency activities in the absence of industrial physician

11. Key link in the industrial relations.

Perspective on Occasions

By being the only representative of Industrial Health Team, her performance and approach will initiate healthy industrial relations at the plant level. In the normal circumstances also, she is the one delivering Industrial Health Services to the worker.

Bloom to Blossom is the story of Industrial Nursing.