Psychiatric Section

Changing Trends in Psychiatric Nursing

By Mrs. Prem Misra

NEWER concepts of psychiatric nursing have emerged out of the new methods of treatment. The outmoded custodial care behind the iron bars has been replaced by therapeutic care in open wards of the general or mental hospital or even within the family set-up.

Psychiatric care is going through a revolutionary change from its era of restraints to the era of miracle drugs. Now with these miracle drugs the therapeutic environments and human relations are being blended for effective therapeutic treatment. The field of psychiatry is still young compared to other medical specialities. New scientific theories and knowledge are being added in the field of psychiatry every day. One famous psychiatrist very rightly observed : "untill the science of psychiatry emerges out of dark woods of ignorance..... every patient has to be seen as a research case." At this early stage of its scientific development, a nurse can also contribute her knowledge gained through close observation of this research case during her 24 hour contact with him.

Custodial care of patient is to maintain his existing condition. Such a case satisfy the needs essential to life or the needs related to maintain the physical safety of the individual.

The therapeutic care on the other hand aims at bringing about the positive change in patient behaviour. It is an educative process. It encourages the patient to participate in his own care towards rehabilitatation. Such a care is directed towards development of therapeutic nurse-patient relationship and the skillful use of her communication techniques and correct observation. The ULTIMATE AIM is to assist the patient to return to his community as a productive member of society.

Besides the emergence of therapeutic care in the treatment and rehabilitation of mental illness. greater emphasis is being laid on public education regarding prevention of mental illness and promotion of mental health. The public health nurse, the industrial nurse, the school health nurse in particular, and all the other nurses coming in contact with the patient or his community can play a vital role in health education in this area. The nurses can :

- make the public aware of the causes of mental illness, early signs and symptoms of emotional and social maladjustment leading to mental disorders.
- make the parents aware how much they can contribute towards fostering mental health and emotional stability in their children, preventing mental illness in adulthood.
- emphasise on the role of family planning in promotion of mental health.
- make the teachers aware of their contribution towards the well-being of students' mental health.
- help the family of the patient to accept him as he is and to meet his needs towards his rehabilitation in the society.
- help in removing the social stigma attached to mental illness by simple explanations of psycho-social factors causing maladjustment within the personality and in human relations, and by introducing the public to various community resources where the help can be obtained.
- make people recognise how the work output of each human being can be multiplied if he is mentally, emotionally, stable and has positive attitudes towards self, society and his work, otherwise with an unhealthy mental state the work cannot progress and the democracy fails in the country.
- make public understand the concepts of full health or total well-being i.e. "the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity" is health as defined by the World Health Organisation.

It is seen in general hospitals today that half the patients come to the out-patient department with physical complaints which originate from the stresses, the strains of psycho-social life, of which neither the family nor the patient himself is aware. A pilot survey was conducted recently in All-India Institute of Medical Sciences Hospital, New Delhi, to estimate the rate of psychiatric problems among the patients attending the medical out-patient department. The survey, conducted by the Department of Psychiatry, revealed that 56% need psychiatric help. This figure indicates importance of teaching psychosomatic medicine in more depth to our doctors and nurses to enable them to recognise the problem fast.

Yet another advancement in psychiatry is that the patient should be treated in his own environments. He comes to the psychiatric hospital only when his environments become threatening or unbearable to him. The modern psychiatry with the help of safer drugs is trying to treat the patient in his own family set-up by re-educating him and his family towards his rehabilitation. This is encouraging in our country where the average man still lives in a joint family or where the family

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Needs and Problems of Patients

A study conducted by Mr. A. K. Bhatia of the Central Health Education Bureau, New Delhi.

A recent study conducted in the orthopedic ward of a New Delhi Hospital revealed that the majority of patients was dissatisfied with regard to food, entertainment, visiting hours and lack of interaction with the hospital staff. Their major worry was related to their illness, recovery and rehabilitation.

About 90 per cent of them were happy that the instructions given by nurses regarding medical, food and other precautions were clear. In the case of doctors the percentage was 70. Majority of them were happy with the medical treatment provided. Others complained of persistant pain and longer duration of stay in the hospital.

Fortyfive per cent felt that they did not get enough opportunity to talk and ask questions to nurses and only 10 per cent was satisfied with the opportunity they received to discuss their problems with doctors. Cent per cent of the patients said they never had an opportunity to meet the social workers in the hospitals.

The problems that they want to discuss with the doctors and nurses related to their illness, the prospects of early recovery, precautions they should take after being discharged and the problems of their rehabilitation.

The patients expressed their dissatisfaction with regard to entertainment (100 per cent) and food (90 per cent). Food, they said, was insipid and lacked taste. The food served was either over-cooked or raw. They complained that there was no provision for recreation in the ward. Recreation could help greatly in diverting their attention from their current illness and help to relieve pain, they said.

Nearly 60 per cent of the patients interviewed said they did not have enough privacy in the ward. This was because a number of patients were being accommodated on the floor in addition to more than 50 beds in a ward. They suggested smaller rooms to accommodate 4 to 5 patients.

In the over all analysis the respondents were of the opinion that there was less opportunities for interaction between patients and the staff.

The study recommended that the Doctors and Nurses could help greatly in removing the patients' concern by way of having more interaction with them and at the same time giving them proper and timely instructions. Further the needs and problems of patients should be taken into consideration while organising educational programmes for patients keeping in view that the patients are also human beings. Film shows, besides serving as a social entertainment, could be utilised for educating the patients regarding different aspects of illness, its causes and preventions. The patients also need education regarding food and nutrition.

A total of 150 adult patients were interviewed for the purpose of the Study. An orthopaedic ward was selected for the study because patients there stay for longer periods and are, therefore, exposed more to the hospital situation.

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patient. But it is not very easy to establish harmonious relationship and create confidence in them unless our skilled and scientific nursing is exhibited with great care. The professional nurse can do it by skilled care which combines the decisive acceptance of responsibility for the treatment with an equally assuring willingness to listen, explain, orient, comfort, reassure, and make personal contact with the patient. These methods help solve his psychological problems successfully.

Though geriatric nursing is not a pressing need at present, the time is fast approaching to consider it seriously. In the West there are geriatric hospitals established to give better care for the older patients because of the rapidly increasing number of old patients. As there are no separate hospitals for the older patients in our country, they are treated in the general hospitals. They need to be treated with special care. There is need to include geriatric nursing in the curriculum of nursing education, so that the old-age patients could get proper nursing care with proper understanding on the part of the nurses.

References

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ties are still strong and the psychiatric hospitals are not enough. The public health nurse with the help of her team can play a significant role in assisting the mentally ill patient and his family in his treatment.

There was time when mental hospitals were barren, unattractive like a shed for the animals and the nurses employed were males to prove their physical strength in restraining the mentally ill patients.

But today the home-like physical environment and warm human atmosphere of the ward is a part of the treatment. The nurse of today requires the strength of her balanced personality more than mere physical strength. Ability to maintain and promote healthy interpersonal relations, skills as an astute observer, accurate recorder, valid interpreter of behaviour and the interactions are important to be an effective psychiatric nurse.
