

Exciting New Challenge for Nurses

By

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EVERY day brings along more and more scientific and technical advancements in medicine. And side by side with this, there has grown a need for new thinking in training—not only of doctors, but nurses too.

To meet the needs of the nursing profession in Britain, the University of Surrey, which started life as Battersea Polytechnic Institute, and St. George's Hospital, London, are collaborating in a new degree course, the first of its kind in Britain. This is a B. Sc. (Bachelor of Science) Honours Degree in Human Biology with an optional Nursing Course. Students taking this will undergo a 4½ year training scheme that covers a very wide field of study; the three-year degree course on its own is, of course, available to students not wishing to take the nursing option.

This course has evolved out of the pioneering work in nursing education for which Battersea has always been wellknown, and that of St. George's Hospital, which has also been always keenly interested in nursing research and education, and which warmly welcomed the scheme when it was suggested.

The Type of Student Sought

The new course is designed to attract students, both male and female, who combine a serious vocation for nursing with high academic ability. And it should open up a whole new and challenging sphere of activity for graduate nurses. They will be able to make an important contribution to hospital life and medical activity far beyond the scope of the average nurse today.

With wide academic knowledge,

plus practical experience, they will be more knowledgeable about new scientific techniques, and able to cope with problems of administration, planning, supervision and instruction of junior nurses.

Their training will prepare them for playing a more active part in research, and in social medicine, as well as for responsible work with international health organisations.

Although similar experiments have taken place in Edinburgh, Scotland, and Manchester, Northern England, and there are special courses in nursing for university graduates, this course is a new and revolutionary idea.

It is science-orientated. The first two years are spent at the University in studying subjects which include biology, chemistry, statistics, human and comparative anatomy, evolution, genetics, psychology and social anthropology.

The third year (and the first part of the nursing option) will be spent at St. George's Hospital, where there will be study of all aspects of nursing under clinical tutors. This stage of the course will provide a broad basis for future specialisation. Paediatrics, obstetrics, and psychiatric nursing will make up part of the syllabus. This third year's work will be closely related to studies at the University in the previous two years. Attention will also be paid to prevention and rehabilitation aspects in care and health, as well as to giving students a knowledge of welfare and nursing outside the realms of the hospital service itself.

Study of World-Wide Problems

The fourth year, back at the

University, is the final year of the degree course. It includes a study of world-wide problems of population, distribution and diseases, as well as a special topic which students can choose themselves, with the help of their tutors. This could, for instance, cover clinical biochemistry, biological research methods, or specialised nursing. Students will also be required to write a dissertation.

After the degree course, a six-month period will be spent in post-graduate nursing practice, so that students are ready to take the examination for State Registration, and their studies at this time will also include the organisation and management of the nursing services.

A syllabus such as this will undoubtedly daunt all but those genuinely concerned to make their way in nursing to posts of great responsibility! And a high level of academic achievement (for instance, General Certificate of Education at "A" level in zoology and chemistry and one other approved subject; plus two approved subjects at "O" level) is required from all applicants for the course.

There are now 25 students embarking on the first of these courses, which started in October 1966. If it is successful, and as there becomes room for more students, the idea is to draw in other hospitals to participate in the scheme.

It will be interesting to follow the careers of those who complete it successfully, and go on to become part of this vital and exciting new concept of the nursing profession.

(With ack. to B.I.S.)