



THE STUDENT HEALTH PROGRAMME

By Kathleen Norris, R.N. M.Sc.

Professor of Public Health—E.T.C.M. Hospital, Kolar.

TO have a good health programme for our students, every one from the top administrator in the hospital down to the sweeper, needs to feel a sense of responsibility for his health, if the student is to be protected. Otherwise disease may be spread by a member of the staff who has not an understanding of the principles of healthful living. It is important that each employee in the hospital feels that he is a member of the health team, thus he may teach the patients. Only as the student herself learns to live healthfully, can she teach others and thus become what every nurse today should be—a good public health nurse as one deals with the public in the hospital as much as one does in the home.

When we think of health, we think of the World Health Organisation's definition: "*Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being, not merely the absence of disease and infirmity*". To bring about optimal health for the student in all these phases, plus spiritual health, without which one cannot have mental health, we must consider how this can be accomplished.

Physical Health

What plans must be made for the student's physical health?

Before her arrival in the School of Nursing, the student should submit a physical health and dental health certificate to certify that she is in good physical and mental health; that necessary corrections have been made before coming and that she has been vaccinated against

smallpox, at least. This is a protection to the school as the parents then cannot accuse the school of not asking for this if she makes the trip to the hospital and then is refused admission on health grounds.

Within the first week after arrival, she should have a complete physical examination after it has been explained to her. This helps allay her fears. A history should be taken, weight, blood pressure, laboratory tests such as stool, urine, blood for Kahn, hæmoglobin, chest x-ray, screening of eyes, ears and skin; observation of any abnormality is recorded. If there is a public health nurse on the staff she may arrange for the completion of these before the doctor makes the final physical examination. If not, it will be necessary to arrange for examinations by the school of nursing. The physical examination should be thorough and made by a senior member of the hospital staff, if possible a woman, who is appointed by the Medical Superintendent. As soon as reports are received, any corrections such as worm treatment, low hæmoglobin, further eye examination, tonsillectomy and immunizations should be arranged, after thorough explanation to the student. If an operation is necessary at any time during the student period, it is wise to get the consent of parent or guardian before doing so, unless in an emergency, when the nursing superintendent will have to assume the responsibility; or if a school of nursing, the director of the school. Any student who is unlikely to stand the stress of nursing should not be accepted.

The student should learn the importance of the responsibility which she should assume to maintain her own health. A visiting hour suitable for both student and

staff, should be set each day and the student should feel that the Health Room is a place to which she can come for help. For emergencies, arrangements should be made with the O.P.D. or with the hospital staff, to have the student report and get the necessary attention.

Each month the staff and student nurses should be weighed; loss of weight may indicate ill-health.

All students and the staff should be protected against typhoid fever and smallpox soon after arrival; they are tuberculin tested, and negative reactors must receive B.C.G. Diphtheria and tetanus toxoid are also important but have to be given separately as the combined toxoid is not available in India and triple vaccine is expensive and unnecessary. Cholera and plague inoculations are advisable if these diseases are endemic in the area or at any time if there is an outbreak or contact with such diseases.

Yearly physical examinations should be done. This should include chest x-ray or screening and booster inoculations. Typhoid needs booster shots yearly, smallpox every three years. Cumulative records on each student and the staff (both nursing and domestic) with corrections, should be kept, and treated as confidential.

When nurses and doctors take care of their health and come to the same Clinic as the student nurses, they set a good example. The staff should encourage the students to report early and receive the necessary care, instead of criticising the student for doing so.

The domestic staff can be helped through classes that teach them to

practice good personal hygiene in care of sputum, stools, washing of hands; sweeping with damp brooms or sawdust so as to not raise dust, thus avoid spreading disease to themselves and others. They can be helped to feel that each domestic staff member is an important member of the health team, which they are.

The Hospital and Hostel Environment

This should provide for safe drinking water and safe water to wash the mouth; a place to expectorate and one in which to throw waste so that flies may not breed; that food is handled in a clean manner; that water is available for bathing and washing of clothes and a place in which to dry the clothes where they will not be stolen. The light and ventilation should be good so as to avoid strain on the eyes. There should be adequate room space for eating, study, outdoor and indoor recreation and provision for privacy. Supervision is necessary to ensure that the hospital and hostel are used to the best advantage. A sufficient number of suitable latrines should be available and the student taught to use them properly.

Nutrition

The diet is one of the big headaches in a school of nursing. When one group is pleased, the other is unhappy. Only if the diet is planned by a capable person and the students help to analyse its nutritional value, will it become well-balanced; it can be varied considerably to please the different tastes. Care needs to be taken to see that protein supplies for the vegetarians is adequate and that the food provided is all eaten by the students, not thrown to the dogs and cats. For this supervision is necessary.

When the dining room is clean, pleasant, dishes attractive and food attractively served, the students are more tempted to eat. Curds are often willingly accepted when made of powdered milk, whereas re-constituted milk itself is refused. The students can learn to take a pride in their dining room and help to keep it clean. A few flowers on the table helps to make it attractive.

Much food value could be con-

served if foods were properly cooked. For example, short-time cooking of green vegetables and potatoes. Fresh and raw fruits and vegetables have higher food values than when cooked.

Students learn in bacteriology classes about the presence of bacteria on the hands and under the nails, but how many student nurses and staff members are required to eat with a fork and a spoon, thus cutting down the chance of infection? Should this not to be a requirement for all staff and students in a hospital or school of nursing? Will this not be a protection to their health? Are the dishes always properly washed with soap or a detergent and hot water and rinsed with boiling water? Is the food well-handled by those serving? Are the kitchen and the dining room protected from flies?

Hygiene

Tooth brushes which are clean and are properly used are necessary to clean the teeth properly as it is impossible to get in between teeth properly with the fingers.

Where it is cold, the student needs to have sufficient warm blankets, and a sweater worn as such instead of as a muffler around the neck. Students need an umbrella when it rains not only to protect their caps but their bodies from getting wet. A sufficient number of blouses and saris are needed to keep the student clean. If her underwear is clean and hair removed from the axilla it helps to prevent body odours. She will find that people want her as a friend if she is fresh and attractive. This helps her emotionally and mentally, as otherwise when she has body odours no one wants her near them.

The nurse should learn the importance of wearing *chappals* to prevent hookworm infection so that when she goes home on leave she will not run around in her bare feet and often get infected or reinfected. Everyone needs to learn the importance of using soap and plenty of friction when washing hands; quantities of water poured on without this do little good; and dipping hands in and

out of bacteria-laden lotion, do more harm than good.

Recreation

Recreation means re-creation. How may we be recreated? Some may be through books, others through music, others by a walk, bicycle ride, a game of badminton or tennis. All need a place and the time that they may be alone to think, or to pray; a time to get together in social gatherings where they may learn to know each other and have fun together, thus breaking down prejudices by getting to know those from other communities who speak a different language, have religious differences and have customs different from their own. If we budget our time there should be time for work, study and play in our daily life.

Mental Health

All have mental and emotional problems. The student nurse who has been loved at home and has felt secure, can much more easily meet her problems and help others to meet theirs successfully. This student will learn to use the overcoming of difficulties to help her to mature emotionally. Those who have not had this family love, understanding and security may need much more help to adjust to the new situation in a school of nursing, to the food, to the new regimen set. Much understanding and patience will be needed to help such a student. This type of student needs to feel that she has a friend in at least one senior staff member to whom she may turn for help and understanding. This help may sometimes be in the form of discipline which will dispel her feeling of guilt if fairly administered, and if it will help her to grow. The Health Room should be a place to which the student can feel free to come and talk over her mental, physical, social and even her spiritual problems. The public health nurse should know when she is capable of helping a student nurse or when the student should be referred to some one else, and whom this should be. The student needs to be helped to understand herself, and why she does as she does, and to overcome that which

(Contd. on page 30)