

*Does the Indian R.N. Meet
the Criteria of a Professional ?
What do you Think ?*

Nursing as a Profession

BY

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IT makes a fascinating reading to trace the growth of nursing. In those dim and doubtful days of yore when sickness was attributed to evil spirits, and hospitals were associated with temples of worship, perhaps the spirit of service was the only guiding factor in caring for the sick. It is evident from the meaning of the word "NURSE", which is derived from the Latin—*Nutricus*, meaning "to nourish, to conserve, to foster and protect". With the dawn of the Christian law of hospitality, the concept of nursing took a wider meaning. In 1633, St. Vincent de Paul departing from the earlier Orders, established an uncloistered visiting nursing service called the Sisters of Charity. St. Vincent initiated the training of nurses, encouraged the Sisters to study the art of nursing and to attend lectures given by physicians. The nineteenth century heralded the concerted effort to improve the hospital services and the quality of nursing. Those luminaries Theodor Fliedner and his wife Friedreike of Kaiserswerth, Germany, laid the foundation upon which Florence Nightingale built and developed reformations in nursing. The two World Wars brought in its wake further revolutionary changes, and nursing emerged with a professional status. Nursing has assumed a new meaning with the change in social patterns.

Nursing is an art embracing the usual accomplishments of the spirit of service, and the precise, dexterities of the hands. Art cannot reach the highest forms of perfection unless the practice is based on the fundamental laws of science. Truly nursing is a fine blend of art and science. The services are developed on scientific principles coupled with the acquisition of specialised knowledge and skills. State accredited Schools of Nursing and many Schools run by Missionaries offer a course in Nursing. With the entry requirements of matriculation these Schools prepare students for nursing in three calendar years. The curriculum covers the physical and biological sciences, social sciences, medical sciences and nursing and allied arts. This comprehensive and well-planned curriculum cultivates desirable attitudes. The acquisition of expert skills follow after long and careful practice.

With this combined teaching in science and arts, a nurse steps into a recognised profession. The concept of a profession accepts the criteria for the promotion and growth of human welfare, recognising its responsibilities to develop education programmes, enlarge the knowledge of practice through research, and determine policies in relation to the activities of their members. High ethical standards of professional and personal conduct and a dedication to service above material gain is the hall-mark of a profession. Under these criteria can we call Nursing in our Country a profession? There is a lack in the development of a complete body of scientific knowledge that is termed "NURSING SCIENCE". Medicine, Law, Theology, having endeavoured to discover facts related to the profession by scientific study, with detailed courses in critical investigations, have long achieved the status of a profession in their respective domains. Now it must engage the attention and thoughts of Nurse Educators to formulate nursing science by a synthesis and calculated integration of the principles of many related sciences basic to nursing. It should not be mistaken for the creation of a new science isolated in its entire entity. Research in the field of nursing to improve the services is only sporadic. With the exception of a few foreign Universities, there is no planned programme towards this end. Critical study and independent thinking have not given due encouragement. This intellectual stagnation only spells disaster and hampers the growth of nursing.

Opportunities for advancement by higher and specialised education in nursing, is limited. Nursing has become unprogressive and static.

The determination of policies in relation to professional activities are not entirely in the hands of nurses. The profession is still subjugated by the medical profession, and hostility and authoritarian rule over nursing is still not uncommon. This attitude is certainly derogatory to the dignity of nursing and has eroded the prestige of the profession. There is nothing short of total bankruptcy in nursing leadership; otherwise nurses would not be standing dazed at the cross roads today.

The pattern of nursing education detailed for Schools of Nursing are in many instances not corresponding to the needs of the community. The curriculum is prototype or antique and requires drastic revision and reorganisation. Many institutions solely depend upon students for service, at the cost of nursing education. Such schools can hardly be called educational institutions since their primary objective is not education. If the establishment of a school is to be accepted as educational centre to bring forth professionals, it should have profound educational objectives. Mature professional status cannot be achieved until spectacular changes in nursing education are brought about. The student and graduate nurse should be made to realise the rapid strides of medical techno-

logy and of methods for keeping pace with this advancement, so as to provide continuous comprehensive and total nursing care to the community.

The American Nurses Association defines professional nursing as "a blend of intellectual attainments, attitudes and mental skills based upon the principles of scientific medicine, acquired by means of a prescribed course in a School of Nursing affiliated with a hospital, recognised for such purposes by the State, and practised in conjunction with curative and preventive medicines by an individual licensed to do so by the State". In comparison, after a critical analysis of the definition, where do we in India, as a profession, stand today?

Curriculum Guide to the Indian Nursing Council Syllabus for General Nursing & Midwifery

by

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In the past few years, the nursing profession in this country, as in others, has been increasingly aware of the need for planning a basic nursing programme which will help the students acquire a broad concept of nursing consistent with modern trends in the profession.

With this objective, the Indian Nursing Council, with the assistance of W.H.O., has set up a project to prepare a Curriculum Guide to the Syllabus for the Course in General Nursing and Midwifery. Miss Helen McLeod has been assigned for this project by W.H.O. Prior to this assignment, Miss McLeod was working in the W.H.O. project at Gwalior to assist in the establishment of a Public Health Nursing Orientation Centre. She, therefore, brings to her new assignment much experience and a good grasp of conditions of nursing training in India.

It is inevitable in a country of the size of ours, that the interpretation and implementation of the Syllabus will vary from State to State and even within States, and the recent emphasis on the integration of public health has focussed attention on this lack of uniformity. It is hoped that the issue of a Guide to the Syllabus will help to set uniform minimum standards, assist with correlation of theory and practice and generally help all

those connected with nurse training to implement a programme which will meet the objectives of the Syllabus.

The activities of the project will be carried out by setting up in each State a specially appointed committee with whom Miss McLeod will work. In this way the observations and ideas of nursing leaders throughout the country will be pooled, analysed and organised so that the Guide will incorporate the thinking of a representative group of nurses. The reports of these committees will be studied by a co-ordinating committee at the National level.

So that these committees can work effectively and productively, they will require the co-operation of all the Schools of Nursing in the country; it is hoped that each one will set up a discussion group to review the Syllabus. The Committees will welcome comments in regard to the content of the syllabus, the distribution of content, the placement and nature of domiciliary experience, programmes which have been carried out and found valuable, and any other relevant information. Methods of collecting such information will be developed and communicated at a later date. Miss McLeod will also visit selected Schools of Nursing in the States for discussions with the staff.