

Ethics : Its meaning and application in Public Health Services

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Hon. Secretary, H. V. L.

ETHICS can be defined as the science of morals applied to human duty in its widest extent irrespective of civil, political and international aspects of activities. It is the knowledge of justice applied in any course of action and the promptness to do the right thing under any circumstances. It can be put in this form "what is my duty?" Or "What I ought to do?"

The understanding of the meaning of ethics, and the knowledge of its application is more essential in the Public Health field than anywhere else as the Public Health Nurse or the Health Visitor has to deal with all categories of personnel, both professional and non-professional, while ministering to the needs of the people in health and disease. Man is a social being and a unit of a family and society, whose feelings and emotions are to be respected, and he should be guided through proper channels in the development of a satisfied and happy society. These days we see that increasing emphasis is being put on the rights of individuals in terms of health, education, religion, subsistence etc. The World Health Organization since its inception, declared "Health" as the fundamental right of the peoples of the world irrespective of colour, creed, or nationality.

Health Services to humanity is universal in restoring, maintaining and promoting positive health through the application of scientific knowledge and skill by organized community schemes with co-ordinated efforts and participation of the people. The Public Health Nurse or the Health Visitor as a key person of the professional team has a great responsibility to the individual, the family and the community, while catering for their health needs.

To quote from the International Code of Nursing Ethics, her fundamental responsibility is three-fold.

1. Conservation of life.
2. Alleviation of suffering.
3. Promotion of health.

The Public Health Nurse or Health Visitor in the Health field, is second to none in her close contact with people. Her acquisition of moral virtues and some of the abstract qualities of a good nurse together with her character, personality and intelligence will guide her behaviour and attitude toward professional, allied and non-professional people.

Courtesy, pleasantness and kindness would go a long way in establishing the right human relationships. In view of the three fundamental responsibilities of the nurse, her relationship also is three-fold namely :—

1. Relationship to individuals in conservation of life either in home or institutions.
2. Relationship to medical and allied professional workers in alleviating human suffering.
3. Relationship to the public in adequate citizenship to plan, organize and participate in the community health programme for better health and longevity.

Life as a gift from God has to be preserved, respected and made use of in the most productive and satisfying way. The Public Health Nurse through her conscientious, intelligent and whole-hearted service can safeguard the individual from possible sources of sickness and dangers. In her personal care to the individual, either in health or in sickness, it should be borne in mind that little services can be great, and

the meanest illustrious when it is done from the heart, not merely well done, but done out of love and pleasure. It is essential that in all these, the attitude of the nurse should be both professional and businesslike in order to safeguard her personal and professional reputation.

The Public Health Nurse in her endeavour to alleviate human suffering, works in close co-operation with the allied professions. Her relationship with doctors, technicians, dietitians, medico-social workers, midwives, *dais*, and others should be welcomed in the sense that she will be looked upon as an adviser and consultant in matters related to the patients recovery, rehabilitation and progress of health.

In this capacity she should be aware of her obligations, powers and limitations with full allegiance to professional loyalty.

In the battle for health against sickness, ignorance and superstitions, the Public Health Nurse finds her place in the foreground. She, as a harbinger of health, can see the problems facing the community in its health campaign, and through persuasion and perseverance can help the community to overcome them. In her services from conserving life and alleviating suffering to positive health, the following can be adopted as a code of Nursing Ethics in the Public Health field.

1. The responsibility of the Nurse in the prevention of disease, protection and promotion of health in order that life may be preserved.
2. The personal and professional preparation of the Nurse for the practice of her calling and for the elevation of its standard.

3. The maintenance of her interest and widening of her knowledge in order to render her services to the fullest productive capacity, keeping pace with modern developments.

4. The acquisition of moral virtues and some of the abstract qualities as love, loyalty, kindness etc., for whole-hearted service whereby she can command the respect and prestige that are due to her profession.

5. The need for co-operation, in the Public Health programme, and the recognition of the Public Health Nurse as a link; and a means of communication between the various organized schemes working for health.

6. The attitude of the Public Health Nurse to respect the

freedom and reputation of each individual with whom she is working, with an appreciation of the powers and limitations of each.

7. The responsibility of the Public Health Nurse to maintain the confidence committed to her trust and to practice social and professional etiquette.

8. The acceptance of responsibility and the discharging of duty conscientiously, irrespective of obstacles on her path of duty.

9. The recognition of the obligation of the Public Health Nurse in the professional and national construction schemes for the health and happiness of the people amongst whom she lives and works.

10. The participation of the Public Health Nurse in the

adequate citizenship of her institution, community and profession for upholding the standards by which they stand; and working for the furtherance of the gospel of health, nationally, and internationally.

As science marches on, the nurse, amongst others, becomes conscious of her achievements in the conservation of human life. She must know that science alone is limited when confronted with personality and human circumstances.

She must recognise the value of the "human touch", of sympathy, of kindness and a cheerful smile.

All these principles are equally applicable to the Health Visitors as a major portion of the Health Services are carried out by the Health Visitors at present. Frequent use of the word Health Visitor is omitted to avoid repetition.

Madras State Branch

NOMINATION SHEET

Nominations are called for the following office bearers :

Office	Present Officer and address	Name of Nominee	Address and T.N.A.I. No.
Vice President	Miss S. Kunjammen (not willing to stand for re-election)		
Programme Chairman	Mr. K. V. Mathew, (willing to stand for re-election) Mental Health Centre, C.M.C. Hospital, Vellore.		
Elected Member (1) Madras	Mrs. P. S. Sarmma (willing to stand for re-election) Sister Tutor, Stanley Medical College, Madras.		

Name of Nominator :

Nominations should reach by the 20th of May, 1960 to returning officer,

T.N.A.I. No. and Address :

MISS ALEYAMMA MATHEWS,

Nursing Superintendent, S.M. Hospital, Ranipet