

PUBLIC HEALTH FORUM

Integration of Public Health into General Nursing Curriculum

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How we can prepare the nurse so that she can participate in the Public Health Programme?

The nurse may be prepared to participate in the Health Programme by integrating Public Health in the basic curriculum. It means that the principles and practice of prevention of disease, maintenance of health, and promotion of sound health should permeate all classroom subjects and bedside practice.

In order to be able to carry out an integrated programme in the School of Nursing, it is essential that the staff including doctors, sisters and staff nurses be acquainted with the aims, objectives and methods of Public Health integration. This may be done through a properly planned organized staff education programme so that all may be able to participate in Public Health Integration.

Public Health Orientation courses have been planned and conducted in various States. Opportunities to attend these courses should be made available to as many nurses as possible.

Team work and team thinking are essential for a successful Public Health integration programme.

Method. When a student is admitted to a School of Nursing a proper health record may be maintained in order to make the student health conscious. It should include medical examination, X-ray, laboratory and other diagnostic tests, periodical check-up, correction of defects and immunization against communicable diseases.

It is imperative that student

nurses learn to acquire healthy habits for their personal and social well-being. A programme of social, cultural and recreational activities may be organized for the off-duty hours according to the needs and interest of the students so that they may have a broader outlook.

According to the curriculum Personal Hygiene and Environmental Hygiene are taught in the preliminary period. During the course of Personal Hygiene lectures, the student's rooms may be visited to see whether she is applying her knowledge or not. Emphasis should be laid on the importance of cleanliness in preventing disease and in promoting health. A few hours may be devoted to teaching principles of elementary methods of Health Teaching. This would enable the student to impart the little knowledge she has gained about Personal Hygiene to others.

The students may be encouraged from the beginning to explain *why*, *how* and *what* while they practise nursing procedures in the demonstration room so that they get into the habit of explaining when they give care to the patient. This experience could later be used in health teaching. During the course of Environmental Hygiene lectures apart from the field visits mentioned in the curriculum such as sewage disposal plant, dairy farm, water supply, the students may be taken around the hospital, hospital kitchen and the servants' quarters etc. to observe the cleanliness of the surrounding area. She should explain the importance of environmental hygiene for the prevention of disease and the promotion of health.

Students may be given assignments on each of the observation visits and discussions should follow.

During the Preliminary Training period, the student, when sent to the wards, should be encouraged to give informal health talks to her patient on personal hygiene.

Along with the nutrition lectures, budgeting, planning of menus, and diet surveys may be taught so that later on the students may be able to help with community food planning according to income levels. If possible, the students should be taken to the nearest market to study the prices of foods available in that particular area. She may be assigned to the hospital or hostel kitchen in order to plan the menu, supervise the cleanliness of the kitchen and teach the kitchen staff the principles of hygiene.

During this period, one or two lectures on "Introduction to Home Visiting" should be given and the students may be taken for home visits, preferably following up on cases from the M.C.H. Centres. This will enable the student to get an idea of the type of work done in the Maternity and Child Health Centres. The services of the Health Visitor in charge of the Centre may be availed of if there is no Public Health Nurse attached to the Training School. The purpose of these visits is to have an understanding of the background of the people so that the student may treat the patient as an individual belonging to a family; and be familiar with the environment which she cannot afford to ignore if she is to nurse the patient as a whole.

Sister Tutors, while teaching how

to care for the sick in hospitals, should lay equal emphasis on the care of the patient at home. Home improvised articles should be set up in the Demonstration Room so that the student nurse will know how to carry out the same nursing procedures for the patient who is not hospitalized. The nurse should learn to help the persons under her care by making the most effective use of the facilities at her disposal in the home of the patient.

Health Teaching should be considered as part of the routine work throughout the training period.

When the Student Nurse is in the second year of her training, the lectures given should not only deal with disease and its cure and treatment, but also with the Public Health aspect of each disease which should be an integral part of each lecture.

The Student Nurse should be made aware of all the health services and social agencies available in the community and learn methods of referral as this would enable her to encourage the patients to make use of these facilities when they need them.

In order to effectively teach the persons under her care, it is essential that a comprehensive health teaching programme be included in the curriculum. This would include lesson-planning, group discussions, informal talks, use of visual aids *e.g.* the Jet series, posters, film strips, flannel graphs, pamphlets, flashcards, slides and films. Role playing in the classroom should also be encouraged in order to help the student gain confidence when actually teaching on the wards and other fields. The student nurse should learn how to make simple visual aids herself, also how to select films, posters etc. from other agencies, for health education.

The student nurse, while giving nursing care to the sick in the wards, should give informal health talks to the patients and attendants. From time to time the student should give formal talks and discussions to patients and attendants about health including how to prevent disease and raise the standard of health. Demonstrations, visual aids such as

flannel graphs, posters etc. should be utilized. Ward sisters and sister tutors will be expected to guide the students in these activities. Case studies should be made with emphasis on health factors in the home that contribute to good health, and those that are conducive to sickness and spread of disease.

The student can play a very important part in the Public Health Programme if she learns to make use of the opportunities in the Out-patients Department.

Here she can teach people not only how to prevent communicable diseases but can take an active part in the immunization programme, and help to raise the health standards of the community by her intelligent advice. Arrangements to follow-up cases should be made by the Sister-in-Charge of this Department so that the student nurse will get the opportunity to give nursing care in the home, immunize contacts and direct patients to the different agencies available in the community. When she follows-up a case, she should do a diet study of the family she visits. Her knowledge of nutrition would enable her to know the defects in the diet, if present. Defects in diet may be corrected through health teaching. The ill-balanced diet in the family is due to faulty food habits, ignorance of food values and improper methods of cooking, and poverty.

The student nurse should learn how to correct defects that she finds in the diet. She should impart knowledge on nutrition, and try to help overcome food prejudices through tolerance and a sympathetic approach to the problem. She may advise on how to improve the preparation and cooking of food so that there will be little waste or destruction of constituents which have food value. She should suggest attractive methods for cooking cheap foods which may have high food values. She should be careful not to urge the use of food stuffs which are nutritionally desirable but economically beyond the means of the family. Diet studies in the servants' quarters of the hospital may also be made in order to gain experience.

The amount of health teaching done by the student should be assessed and entered in the experience record.

In the third year of her training the student gains confidence and is able to take a bigger part in Public Health activities in the different health centres, clinics and hospitals. Some facilities should be set up to give the student a 'block' of experience in Public Health activities—in practice in the same way that is she assigned to award for experience in medical, surgical and paediatric nursing. The following clinics would provide a good opportunities for Public Health Integration.

1. T.B. Centre.
2. V.D. Clinic.
3. Infectious diseases hospital.
4. Leprosy Clinic.
5. Maternity and Child Health Centre both rural and urban.
6. School Health Centre.

Field visits to community Development Projects, National Extension Services, factories, creche, nursery schools and other social agencies, should be included.

Lectures on paediatrics, tuberculosis, infectious diseases and health problems of the country should be given by doctors and other specialists, and these should include the Public Health aspects.

Students should be encouraged to take part in discussions on current health problems and their solutions.

To Summarise

1. Staff Education Programme and In-service Training in Public Health for entire staff.
2. Maintaining proper personal and environmental hygiene.
3. Maintaining health records for students and staff.
4. Public Health aspects and integral part of these lectures throughout the course.
5. Inclusion of methods of teaching in basic course.
6. Preparation, selection and use of visual aids in teaching methods.
7. Supervised health teaching throughout the course.
8. Importance of experience in special areas where the public health aspects can be applied *e.g.* O.P.D. Casualty, M.C.H. Tuberculosis, Infectious Diseases Hospital, Leprosy Clinic etc.