

Nursing in Industry (2)

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Women and Children in Industry

Economic needs and a changing pattern of family life have brought about a minor revolution in industry and today a large number of women work side by side with men. Neither marriage nor motherhood disqualifies them from working. On the contrary the Factories Act gives the expectant mother the right to work till six weeks before the expected date of delivery and she is at liberty to bring her 6 weeks' old baby to the workplace to be taken care of at the works' creche while she is at work. The Factories Act reads: "In every factory wherein more than fifty women workers are ordinarily employed, there shall be provided and maintained a suitable room or rooms for the use of children under the age of six years of such women. Such rooms shall be under the charge of women trained in the care of children and infants."

Many firms are faced with the problem of providing suitable persons for supervision of the creche and, therefore, the responsibility of looking after the creche falls in many instances on the nurses, although it is not a part of the industrial medical service.

Creche Work

This needs a good bit of thought and precision as it means planning for round the year requirement of a fluctuating number. Twenty square feet per child is the accepted living space. Plentiful supply of hot and cold water, facilities for washing soiled napkins, and drying linen specially during the long monsoon months have to be thought of. A fly proof pantry for heating and storing of milk and food supplied from the factory canteen is essential. Feeding arrangements range from mother's milk to solids depending on the age group. It is the duty of the nurse-in-charge to

draw up a balanced diet in consultation with the medical officer. The primary object of the creche is to give the mother the psychological satisfaction of having her children close to her and well cared for during the hours she works. Individual attention depending on the physical, mental and educational development may have to be planned for each child. Unreasonable demands or dissatisfaction with the creche service is not an uncommon affair. The nurse has to have immense patience and tact to win and retain the confidence of these clients. Occasional minor ailments are treated on the premises but the creche is by no means a hospital for the sick child. It is required of the sister in-charge to maintain an annual record of all the new admissions and a daily muster roll for attendance at the creche. Such records are called for inspection by Inspector of Factories during her visit to the creche. The nurse has also to submit an annual report to the Factory Inspector giving details of admission—age, sex and number of children attending the creche, the type of food, medical care, toys supplied, recreational and educational facilities available and the number and kind of staff provided for the care and supervision of these future citizens.

Preventive and Maintenance Work

The aim of a factory medical service is to foster health and safety consciousness among the employees and to achieve this objective clinical as well as preventive and maintenance work are carried out. Clinical method as already discussed provides prompt and efficient care of all injuries to prevent sepsis and shorten convalescence. Examination of all illness cases is necessary to arrive at a correct diagnosis and decide whether it is a case to be treated at the factory medical centre or to be referred to the

daniel doctor. Preventive and maintenance work as will be seen from the chart (Refer Page 69 March issue) includes survey of every important aspect of health, out of which, assessment and supervision of the physical condition of the worker, from the time he joins, is perhaps the most important. This covers a range of physical examinations. They are:

Pre-employment Examination

Detailed medical examination of all prospective employees is carried out to assess their physical fitness and specific suitability for the jobs for which they are to be employed. This examination is also a check on the new entrant lest he be a carrier of any sort of infection which may spread among other workers with whom he shall have to work. A thorough physical check up is given to ensure everything is alright. Some prefer to take a miniature radiograph of all new employees to exclude tuberculosis.

Periodical Health Examination

Complete check up of all workers should be made at least once a year to see that the health of the worker does not deteriorate in any way and to advise him on health matters and the importance of early correction of minor defects by spectacles, dentures, etc. that may be necessary in the case. These examinations often reveal cases that may need greater attention and specialist's treatment; for example cardiac trouble, or hypertension, or diabetes, etc.;

Occupational Examination

Many occupations expose workers to health hazards. It is necessary to detect by medical check up if these hazards are having any adverse effect on people working there, in spite of any precautions that may have been taken as in the case of miners in the coal field, for example. Similar examination is also necessary when the job is such that any illness in an employee is more than usually dangerous to other employees. A good example is the canteen worker, who, if a carrier, may spread infection to the diners.

Re-entrance Examination

This examination is conducted when a person returns from sickness in order to determine whether he has completely recovered so that he is fit to do his work and is not likely to carry infection to others.

Inoculations

For prevention of the preventive diseases the importance of giving inoculations and vaccinations cannot be highly emphasised. It is given on a voluntary basis but the nurse by virtue of her influence on the workers can get them to voluntarily come forward and take at regular intervals, and specially during the outbreak of an epidemic, prophylactic inoculations and thus check the spreading of communicable diseases.

Health Education

It consists mainly of spreading information on healthful living by means of talks, posters, films, health bulletins, etc. The best way of doing this is by individual talks. Every nurse is a teacher who during the course of her work is unconsciously doing such talking when she explains to the patient "Why" "When" and "How" illness takes place. If she cultivates this habit with a purpose, in the field of industrial health, the opportunities for imparting health and safety education are unlimited.

The new entrant may not know about factory life and his hopes and fears are likely to be many. In the very first interview the nurse should inspire confidence of the worker by explaining the value of the physical examination, the service of the medical centre, use of canteen, the value of a balanced diet and the safety measures existent in the plant. She must make it clear to them that she is a friend interested in their whole welfare just as much as in their physical aches and pains. Whether it is a minor injury or a long time illness, the nurse while attending on the patient can during her talks and intelligent questioning explain the principles of safe working and cleaner living habits. Their very suffering becomes, so to say, an excellent teaching opportunity.

Survey of the Plant

The visit to the various departments and workshops in the factory is in itself a self-education to the nurse to promote efficiency in her work. To know the men at their work makes it easier for her to understand and solve the problems that may arise out of their work and working conditions. Such visits also improve the nurse's relationship with all personnel and help her to participate in plant welfare activities which is an important role the nurse should never neglect.

During these visits the nurse may notice whether the protective measures and safety gadgets are put to good use by the workmen. The supervisor who is in constant contact with the men at work may draw her attention to anything unusual that he has noticed in a particular individual. The workers themselves may tell her the shortcomings in their working conditions, supervisors or co-workers. Talks on good house-keeping, on avoiding indiscriminate spitting, etc. can be driven home during these visits.

The nurse should also be familiar with regulations regarding heating, lighting, ventilation, seating arrangements, canteen, wash place and cloak room arrangements. Of course, many of these problems are either administrative or technical in nature and it may be beyond the scope of the nurse to bring about the necessary change all by herself. The nurse can however use her own judgment how best to take it up with the medical officer who may bring it to the notice of the officers concerned. For example, while visiting a place where an accident has occurred she may suggest changes necessary to prevent another accident.

House Visiting and Utilization of Community Resources

It has been estimated that many of the illnesses observed in the work-place have their origin elsewhere, being the end point of a chain of events, arising outside the factory. One of the reasons for accident proneness in workers has been established to be the unawareness of the impending danger due to mental

worry. It is advisable that benefit of the industrial health service should also be extended to their homes through home visiting. Such link between home life and factory life was not lost sight of by the pioneers of industrial health. It is recorded that nurse Flowerday worked during the mornings in the factory and spent the afternoons working for the families in their homes.

The family health problems may be many and varied which a nurse may not always be able to solve by herself but she can certainly guide them to the right source. Management of the unmarried mother, adoption of the new born baby, care of the aged and chronic sick, hospitalization of a seriously ill member of the family, childlessness, family planning, sources of financial help and many such questions will face the industrial nurse who goes out of her official boundary to help her clients. Their solution will depend on the nurse's ability to co-ordinate her services with the other health and welfare services of the community. Hence it is recommended that the Industrial Nurse should maintain a friendly liaison with the hospital nursing staff and the panel doctor of the employees. Nurses should also maintain liaison and have a list of addresses of all the physicians and specialists in the area, the fondling homes, free ambulance service, correction school, rescue homes for women, Salvation Army and Red Cross Society.

Rehabilitation of the Ill and Injured Workers

The success of rehabilitation depends entirely on the attention that is given specially for this purpose right from the time of injury or illness until the patient resumes normal work. With the introduction of the Employees' State Insurance Scheme the patient is at liberty to choose his doctor between the factory and community medical service. To the panel doctor the industrial worker may just be another "patient" in his list. He may not be aware of the special significance of the injured finger in relation to the type of the job of the worker or the importance of a change of job for

T.B. patient working in a dusty department or damp process. The nurse is also, like the physician, a liaison between the employee and the employer in this matter of rehabilitation and has equal loyalty to both and must be able to inspire their confidence. Sometimes it becomes necessary for her to explain to the family or panel doctor the facility available to the ill and injured in the workplace in the form of treatment or of covered jobs to help to cut down the convalescence period.

The Problem Cases

The medical centre is traditionally the place which holds the confidence of people and that confidence must be acquired, maintained and strengthened by the successful and humane treatment of those who are sick and disabled.

Hypertensives, cardiacs, diabetics, asthmatics, psychosomatics and such other 'eternal' patients are real problems to industry. On the one hand their services cannot be terminated as permanently unfit, on the other hand they cannot work unless taken care of day in and day out by providing suitable diet, medical care, sheltered and safe jobs and constant health supervision. Success in solving these problems upholds the morale of the industry and is of vital importance for the psychological cure. It infuses confidence in the sick worker that he can still earn his living and will be reckoned as a valuable member of the society rather than a burden to it. The plant survey which is a part of the nurse's duty provides her the opportunity for a scrutiny of the jobs most suitable for these 'patients'.

Catering for All

A hospital nurse may be changed from one ward to another. So also a public health nurse from one district to another. In striking contrast to this the nurse in industry lives and works with her patients for years and has to gain acceptance as an important member of this large industrial family. She is expected to play many different roles throughout her daily work and has to be flexible enough to attend to these

with equal poise. Industrial population seems to retain an evergreen memory of the good and the bad which she may have done or the occasional unpleasant unavoidable "musts" attached to her duties. This is one of the important reasons why the nurse in industry should maintain an absolute neutrality in all disputes.

Many of the manifestations of illness such as vague pains, head aches, general ill-feeling are due to emotional upsets and if tactfully analysed they will be found to have their origin either in the department or in the employees' home. The tendency among workmen to pin all sickness to work and working conditions is not unusual either. Slightest deviation from the routine production procedure or the introduction of the manufacture of a new product or modern methods of job evaluation for some of them at least are enough to cause emotional upsets that manifest as generalised malady. The nurse through her ability to be a good listener is often a confidant of the workers. When a trouble brews the workers occasionally do a bit of loud thinking with her and whiff of news are carried to her. On the strength of this and using her own tact in the right quarters the nurse can indirectly help to avoid an unpleasant situation.

Co-operation of all Plant Departments

From what has been described it will be obvious that for success the Industrial Nurse must be able to obtain close co-operation of the various departments, supervisors and the workers themselves. Our work, like all scientific effort, to be fruitful must be based on sound principles. The workers' health is closely related to the environment in which they work and to the strain and stress to which they are exposed. Any improvement in this respect is possible if there is acceptance of the medical opinion by the administrators and engineers. For such acceptance concrete proof based on statistical study is necessary. In order to produce this the nurse has to have an understanding of the value of records, knowledge of record keeping and patience

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