

Administration of State Nursing Service

By

Mrs. Uma Mittra B.SC. (N)

Assistant Director of Health Services (Nursing) West Bengal

The Origin of State Nursing Service

As the modern State assumes more and more functions in the realm of education and health, nursing becomes a national responsibility. That was quite happily in the past left in the hands of private agencies and individuals, can no longer be left now in such areas as the ever-expanding nursing needs of the community demand immediate solution on a broad basis. Nursing, therefore, cannot be left anymore with individual hospitals for supplying those things and meeting the requirements of a growing nation in its multifarious activities. A modern health service set up with all its ramifications of maternal and child welfare programmes, school health work, social and industrial hygiene programmes and communicable disease prevention activities etc. can never meet its nursing responsibilities, had nursing been left as in the days of yore in the realm of hospital care only.

A few years ago the whole system of modern nursing in India needed reviewing and redirecting in matters of its needs and philosophies. Moreover, in the past, concentration of health and nursing work were done in urban areas only to the neglect and detriment of those who lived and constituted 80% of India's population—the people in the rural regions. Today we can no longer neglect their needs nor turn deaf ears to their calls for nursing help. A balancing out, therefore, has become necessary in the provision of nursing service for both urban and rural areas. If some groups were receiving in the past too much nursing aid in comparison with some of the other, sacrifices have to be made now in favour of those who were receiving too little help.

This act of balancing out and filling up the gaps form the cornerstone of our

policies in nursing work in the State today. But who was to do it? Who was to send nurses to remote areas where the nurses themselves were only employees of different hospitals dedicating their lives not to save the vast needs of the nation, but only to serve one little unit of it? Who was to think, to direct, to co-ordinate and to plan a system of a highly technical nature falling within the realm of the nursing profession only if there was no central figure of a nurse operating a whole chain of nursing activity?

It was against this background that the State Nursing Service was born with its definite aims, objectives and responsibilities in relation to the nursing needs of the day. To those who are members of such a service accrue all the benefits and dignity of working for the nation and for the country even if it means sometimes partial sacrifice of individual choice and movement in selection and discarding of a job.

The nursing needs of a modern community are complex and they envisage curative, preventive and constructive role playing by the nurses themselves. A whole new vista has opened up in relation to the nurse's job with the advance of the biological and social sciences. A new horizon has arisen with the nurse as the central figure who deals with the patient as a whole unit of physical, psychological and moral living being right through and even after various specialists have divided him up in multitudinous portions of scientific interest. It is with the new job consciousness that nurses no longer look upon themselves as mere hand-maidens of doctors who are unable to think for or take the initiative themselves. Modern nurses do not consider themselves as only auxiliaries in the total field of medicine, but they have definite concepts of their

responsibilities and contribution to society although they still accept the medical-man as the leader of the health team.

The relationship between the medical-man and the nurse today is based on mutual dependency and respect where each is conscious of the values of contribution of the other in the context of the final goal—the welfare of the patient and the community itself. If such a relationship is to be developed between the two members of the health team and if the young nurses are to inculcate such habits of thought from their student days and if new knowledges have to be imparted on the basis of scientific advancement of the profession itself, then the very important subject of nursing education cannot be left to the vagaries of chance in the hands of private institutions with their multiplicity of aims, objectives and interests criss-crossing each other.

There is no doubt that some institutions would play their roles well and discharge their new responsibility to satisfaction of many, but the chance of a vast number of others in not waking up the new needs of the profession as well as those of the community is too great and it would seriously jeopardise the quality and the quantity of the production of nurses and the quality and quantity of nursing service to the nation.

Area of functioning and Span of control of State Nursing Organization

The Nursing Service Organization of a State covers the total nursing needs of the community, with its preventive, curative and constructive aspects. Wherever there is health work done in the State, the long arm of Nursing somehow reaches it or should reach it. If the work is effective, nursing is the channel through which the message of health passes. Nursing is woven through and through in all its meshes. A Central Department of Nursing with a Nurse Director or Nursing Chief or Superintendent of Nursing Services or (whatever name she may be called by) covers all aspects of nursing work in the hospitals, in the homes, in the school and in the community at large. It caters to the maternal

and child welfare needs, the school health projects, the communicable disease prevention programmes, the environmental sanitation measures and health education campaigns. It does them in addition to supplying nursing services in the hospitals, health centres and clinics, wherever those are. Its area of jurisdiction is vast and its span of control is great. It organizes, administers and directs the nursing work in the State.

Staffing

This type of nursing organization has the man-power of a large body of nursing staff prepared for all shades and types of nursing work ranging from very complicated techniques and health education to simple kinds of bedside care. The selection, appointment, transfers and promotion of these staff form a special set of responsibilities for this Department as do also the welfare, benefit, interests, the medical care in time of sickness, provision for old age and retirement etc. etc.

Planning

No organization can maintain and infuse a service with living quality unless it plans. The organization must plan not only its programme of actions in day to day work, but also for the future. This planning, however, to be effective must be based purely on needs of not only the country, but also the needs of the service itself. It must be co-ordinated and integrated. The two sets of needs must not play opposite forces to each other, but rather blend and be unified into a single line of action. Such planning needs vision and foresight. Such planning needs sensibility and clear thinking. In short, it needs a scientist's head and an artist's touch.

Budgeting

Almost co-existent with planning in a good organization goes budgeting or providing financially for the activities as planned for both the present and the future to take place. Budgeting in nursing service is a problem of the first order. With the high cost of living existing in the countries of the world today, goods or services cost much. It is quite a task,

therefore, to maintain a balance between an efficient standard of service and a swollen, inoperable and a deficit budget.

Records and reports

The study of history reveals to us that those nations who did not record in written form their experiences, achievements and developments lost in the race for progress. Because there was no procedure permanently inscribed for future generation to study and use; whatever advancement those nations had achieved, vanished in a certain period of time. This was possible only because there was nothing or very little for posterity to follow.

Recording and reporting, therefore are essential in a nursing administration set up not only for the work of administration itself, but also for posterity to benefit by the experiences of those in service today. Records and reports are also important for dissemination of nursing information and evaluation and assessment to nursing activities.

Indents and supply of equipment

"Give us the tools and we will finish the job" was a well-known wartime saying of Mr. Churchill. The same idea holds good in time of peace in other lands. Equipment needed for good nursing care of patients and sound education of student nurses in training schools remain the responsibility of the Nursing Chief and her Department. Her indent is based on study of needs and anticipation of future requirements. A good system of indenting consists of 3 factors: a study of needs, review of the stock-in hand and an assessment of additional requirements. Only thus is wastage eliminated as are misuse and negligence in dealing with public property. A good nurse-administrator always has an eye on the purse-strings and tries to enthuse her nursing staff with the same regard for public money.

Nursing Education

A great deal has been said about the administrative responsibilities of a Government Nursing Organization. Equally important, however, are its responsibilities with regard to nursing education. The selection and admission

of students into training schools, maintenance, evaluation and improvement of nursing standards and students' experience, implementation of curricula as laid down by the Nursing Council, laying down and reviewing of policies in the training institutions and all other activities in connection with nursing education of the State fall within the purview of the Nursing Department and its Chief. In addition to the responsibilities in the field of basic nursing education, the Nurse-Administrator has the important task of arranging for the professional growth of her graduate staff by means of staff conferences, refresher courses, post-graduate educational programmes etc. etc. until the whole area of post-basic nursing education is covered.

Besides commitments in the field of professional nursing education, the State Nursing Organization bears responsibilities in the training of nursing auxiliaries who may go through an elementary formal course or an on-the-job training programme.

The role and relationship of the State Nursing Chief

The State Nursing Chief called by whatever name, is directly responsible to the Head Medical Man of the State Health Services in some places and in others responsible to him through one of his Deputies. Whatever may be her relationship in the State Health set-up, she represents the Nursing Profession and Nurses to Government and all initiative and leadership in nursing matters must come from her.

The Nursing Chief, as has been shown in this paper, has directional, supervisory executive as well as advisory roles to play. In the Government, she is the Nurse-Executive as well as the Adviser. With private hospitals and agencies she acts on purely advisory capacity, but woe betide those who neglect her advice.

As an educationist she is the Chief Inspector of all nurses' training schools on behalf of the Government as well as the Nursing Council and thus she retains an over-all control over the whole field of nursing education.

In the realm of public relations, she acts as spokesman and the interpreter of policies and principles in the field of nursing.

Nursing has travelled a long way from the day it started as an organized profession barely 100 years ago. Its specialisation and development today as a highly technical profession have compelled authorities in every country to place Nursing Administration in the hands of Nurses themselves. It is a challenge and a call for us to prove our mettle and there is no room for a small person with a limited outlook in such an organization. It calls for qualities of leadership and motives of service of the highest order. It calls for a person with a broad and progressive outlook and a sense of fairplay as well as sound professional education and a philosophy of life.

If, as has been said before, administration is harnessing of resources for a special purpose, it may also be said that it is also the conduction of the energy released from the process of harnessing along special channels for the attainment of that purpose. For administration to be effective, the harnessing must be complete. For the administrative machinery to move without hitches, the conduction

of energy should reach all the pivots. The aims and objectives of the organization should be clearly defined while the purpose of the set-up should be amply stated. Its philosophy and method of work should be fully understood by its own members as well as those outside it. The responsibility of each member should be made known to her as well as to those whom she knows well.

In an organization where goals are clearly stated, methodology of work laid down, relationship of members defined and constant evaluation takes place of its own activities, there is harmony and peace within the organization and prestige for it outside. There is dissemination of knowledge from such an organization and as days go by there is greater and greater service to the community. Such is the fabric of a State Nursing Service Organization while the strands out of which this fabric is woven are of human relationships, human values and human needs.

CORRECTION

We regret omission of price and publishers name of "*Aids to Surgical Nursing*" by Katherine F. Armstrong in the *Book Reviews* published on page 138, Nursing Journal of India, April 1959. Please note that the price of the Book is 10s. 6d. sterling and Messrs. Bailliere, Tindall & Cox Ltd., London, W.C. 2 are the publishers.

Notice

Members are requested to note the change in address of Miss T.K. Adranvala. Her new address is :

Miss T.K. Adranvala, C/o Directorate General of Health Services, Secretariate, New Delhi.

