

PUBLIC HEALTH

Fundamental Principles of Public Health Nursing

By

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Public Health Nursing is an essential part of the community's health programme which aims at keeping the individual, family and community healthy, strong and happy.

The evolution of time and the ravages of war have made it necessary to find ways and means by which the health of the people may be protected, maintained and promoted. This great concern for the health of the people has led to the study of bacteriology, sanitation, statistics etc., which has enabled the development of the public health movement. Modern Public health is based on the theory that treatment is prevention and is concerned with safeguarding the health of the individual as well as protecting the public. The present-day public health has been defined as the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health and efficiency through organized community efforts based on sound principles. The study of public health nursing shows that it has gone through different stages of standardization. This standardization expressed in the form of a creed or expression of faith in certain methods of work has been called the fundamental principles. These principles are the result of work which vary according to local conditions but having the same influence on the purpose for which it is adopted. These principles are not limited, and as public health nursing is constantly moving towards wider spheres of achievements to keep pace with scientific development, the fundamental principles can also be widened to reach its goal. The fundamental principles in public

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health Nursing include the following :—

I. A thorough knowledge of the existing conditions of the community.

Before the starting of any work,

there must be the evidence of a felt need in a particular area. With regard to the organization of Public Health Nursing, the need must be studied well by a survey of the area and community where the programme is to be planned. The survey should include the population, means of transportation, local amenities, mortality and morbidity rates, the prevalent communicable diseases, the extent of medical facilities etc. If the sick are uncared for for want of an adequate health programme, careful study must be made as to whether there is already one existing, and if so, the willingness and co-operation of that agency should be sought for its further development so that adequate care can be given to the sick. In all planning and construction the official health authorities should be consulted, and where once the work is started, frequent and careful studies must be made at subsequent intervals to find out the difference. In such a study there are the possibilities of finding new needs to be met and for widening the field of achievements.

II. A responsible agency to carry on the programme.

For the growth and development of any organization, far-sighted, intelligent and sustained effort is very necessary. This is very true with Public Health Nursing also. As Public Health is a great concern, and success depends upon the co-operation of the public with those engaged in Public Health work, it will be wise to have frequent meetings to discuss problems confronting them and the ways and means of solving them. If representatives from the public are invited to these meetings, there can be a better understanding of the work and hence better co-operation and co-ordination, better results and greater achievements. Moreover this will give the public an awareness that Public Health should be the responsibility of all the people, and cannot bring forth its expected results without the understanding and co-operation of the

people for whom it is working. Work sponsored by any single individual seldom bears good results, it often fails because of the lack of united thinking and effort. Public Health Nursing to be a powerful agency in community's health programme, needs the backing of intelligent men and women, who are unselfish, and command trust and respect from their fellow citizens. There must be systematic and intelligent methods of organization and administration for the smooth running of the programme and economy of time and effort.

III. The agency should be non-sectarian and non-political.

Public Health Nursing should be extended to all without any difference in colour, caste, creed or political affiliation. The individual's point of view with regard to religion must be respected. Even the Public Health Nurse should have an understanding of the religious customs prevalent in her community. The public should look on her not as a politician or a representative of any particular group, but as a good and loyal citizen of her city, state or country. Her services should not be limited to any particular group. No group should be deprived of her service either because they are too poor to pay for it, or too well-to-do to accept free service.

IV. Trained personnel to carry on the work.

Qualified Public Health Nurses with broad vision, leadership and enthusiasm are essential for the growth, maintenance and advancement of the programme. Medical personnel with Public Health knowledge is an asset to the work as they understand the nurse's point of view as well as the need of the people and the health problems confronting them. Countries where professional Public Health Nurses are employed show outstanding results in achieving good health among the people.

V. Health teaching should be the nuclei of the programme, and home visiting should be considered as the chief method for teaching the principles of health.

Each individual should be considered as part of a family and the community. The teaching of health has emerged from the scientific study of bacteriology, and also the effect of social and economic factors which directly and indirectly influence the health of the individual. Health teaching should be based upon, the care and treatment of the sick, the prevention of disease and the promotion and maintenance of health. Health teaching must be simple and adaptable according to a family's social, cultural and economic status. Lantern slides, demonstrations, models, literature etc. are of invaluable help in health teaching. The teaching of health widens in scope so as to keep pace with the advancement of social, sanitary and medical sciences. In order to achieve good results in treating the disease, protecting the individual and promoting and maintaining health, the family should be properly instructed with regard to the care of the sick, methods of preventing diseases should be adopted, and knowledge underlying the principles of health should be imparted to every one. Public Health Nurses should understand these basic principles and should apply them to the best of their knowledge and ability. With regard to students in nursing, facilities should be extended to them for field work, taking the family to be the centre for health teaching.

As medicine and other social and sanitary sciences are making rapid progress, it is necessary that Public Health Nurses should have up to date knowledge of these things by reading magazines, books, publications, attending professional meetings and by sharing experiences by writing reports.

Health teaching should be extended to pre-natal mothers, industrial

workers, school teachers and students etc.

VI. Co-operation and co-ordination of health services with other agencies.

The Public Health Nurse should realise her responsibilities, the scope of her work and her limitations in order to fulfil her professional obligations. Analysis of the various health needs of her community and an understanding of the various services that are available will help her in her objective. A periodical meeting with these agencies will help each understand the other's point of view and problem. This will also create better understanding, enabling her to avail herself of the opportunities in the cause of community health. Health services should be extended to school children, industrial workers etc. by annual health examinations, health supervisions, and health protection through immunization against various preventable diseases. When health centres are co-ordinated with Dental Clinic, Chest Clinic, Venereal Disease Clinic etc., complete 'follow up' work can be done and results in more effective service. An understanding of the common problems, with tolerance of others' point of view, with appreciation of working together for the betterment of the people brings good results. Right attitudes and good judgment are the guiding principles for co-operation.

VII. Record-keeping.

A uniform and systematic method of keeping records is absolutely essential as it will save time, duplication of work and other unnecessary troubles. Records are essential guidance and for future planning. Records should be accurate and contain specific facts.

VIII. Health Conferences.

Community health conferences should be held from time to time to create interest and awareness of responsibilities and enthusiasm for wider achievements.

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