

## MEN NURSES IN INDIA

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(Read at the Mid-India Medical Meeting at Jubbulpore, Oct. 1940)

### History

In the early days of history, medicine and nursing were closely associated with one another. In ancient India we can trace the history of nursing from 1500 B.C. in the Sanskrit Vedas, the ancient sacred books of India, and see how nursing was associated with sickness and the healing of disease. The Vedas speak of the qualifications and duties of a young male nurse, and they show that it was the young men in India who did the nursing, not the young women; and occasionally the older women. The nurse must know how to compound drugs, must be clever, devoted to the patient, pure in mind and body, competent to cook food, skilled in bathing and washing the patient, and should know how to rub and give massage to the patient. He should be skilled in making and washing beds, and he should never be unwilling to do anything that may be ordered, such as lifting the patient or helping him to walk. In those ancient Indian hospitals there were employed also professional musicians and story-tellers who cheered and diverted the patients by singing and by reciting poetry to them.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan, and the example of Christ Himself washing the feet of His disciples, may be considered as acts of nursing in the highest sense of the word.

Hospitals have existed for centuries, but nursing in hospitals in the modern sense is recent. When Henry VIII. repressed all English monasteries the nursing brethren and sisters went abroad, leaving no "haven" for the sick and dying in England. Nurses needed no knowledge of science in those far-off days; since medical science was not far advanced, custodial care was all that was available.

But scientific discoveries have entirely changed our mode of life and thinking. Schools for nurses which have taken the place of apprenticeship-training have been established in some countries and this is the latest and highest development. The old custodial type of nursing has been replaced by intelligent care and supervision.

To indicate the modern development of Men Nursing in India I cite a letter received from Miss F. Schaefer, who since 1921 has reorganized and remodelled the Nursing Training School for Men Nurses at Miraj:

"When I came to Miraj in 1921 there were men nurses in the hospital but all the classwork they had was compounding and they were called compounders. They must have had some practical instruction in nursing but they had no theoretical instruction. Miraj was among the first to have regular training for men nurses. I think they had practical training in Government hospitals earlier than in Mission hospitals to fit them for orderlies, but as far as I know Government hospitals have never given a complete course of nursing instruction to men to prepare them for registration.

"I see in the Miraj Hospital report of 1922: 'The compounders

have received training in the dispensary only. They have not had classroom instruction, but they are asking for the same course of study (except obstetrical) as is given to the women nurses. It is now being arranged for them and they can then take the Association examinations.' (This was when our Nurses' School in Miraj was a member of the Missionary Nursing Association of the Marathi Area.)

"In the 1924 report I see we had one senior man nurse, four in the second year, six in the first year, and one probationer just entered. In 1925 the compounders took the Association examination in first-year nursing. In 1926: 'This year we have specially striven to carry on the classwork. The nurses, especially the men nurses, have often rebelled against the amount of time they have to put in on lessons. We have for the first time in our history compelled the men to take the full course, the same as the women nurses. It caused some ruffled feelings at first, because they felt they were compounders of medicines. But when introduced to the subject of anatomy and physiology, they found it interesting and difficult, so that before long their respect for the art of nursing increased and they have settled down without any further antagonism.'

"In 1927 the Missionary Nursing Association granted permission to men nurses to take the Association examinations with a view to being registered. In 1929 we joined the Bombay Presidency Nurses Association, and in 1930 men nurses as well as women nurses took its examinations.

"In Miraj there were usually more women than men. In 1931 out of a group of 46 there were 20 men.

"In 1933 the total number of graduates from Miraj registered in Bombay was 26: 16 women and 10 men.

"The greatest demand for men nurses from Miraj has been in other Mission hospitals. However, we sent five graduates to Mysore to the Krishnarajendra Hospital under the Mysore Government."

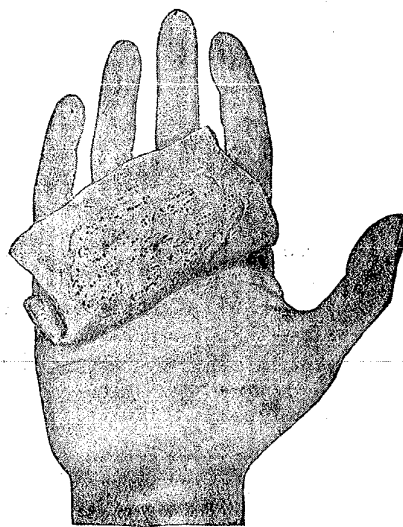
#### **Demand for Men Nurses: Classification**

*Men Nurses in General Hospitals.* Speaking of General Nursing, in our hospitals in India we see that men nurses are employed in large numbers in both medical and surgical departments; and considering that not long ago these men nurses were trained in Mission hospitals only, we see that nowadays the demand for them is steadily growing, by the fact that the Madras Government opened several training centres for men nurses to meet the Government need. It is obvious that the field for men nurses is not confined to the care of men patients only. After graduation men nurses can take up special studies such as Pharmacy, Technician Courses and Anaesthesia, and it is for this modern thorough training that we see our men nurses render equally good service in the operating theatre, dressing room, dispensary and outdoor clinics of the general hospital where they serve men and women.

*Men Nurses in Special Clinics: Genito-Urinary Department.* In the General Hospital there is a great need for men nurses to care for men patients, especially in the genito-urinary department. It is here



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with emery ground into  
the wound.*



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that we often find the untrained orderly doing the actual nursing of men patients. Here is the special place for the well-trained man nurse. He not only renders good nursing care to the patient, but he is qualified to teach the orderly how to do his work in a way that assures the patient's comfort and safety.

*Men Nurses in Mental Hospitals.* In many mental hospitals men patients are being inadequately cared for because they lack the skilled attention of intelligent men nurses. "The care of men patients falls largely to the lot of attendants and a comparatively small group of men nurses. Not deprecating the value of the right type of woman nurse with individual men patients or the fine effect on morale in a men's ward exercised by her presence, yet the mental nursing of men patients is a *man's* work" (Dr Daniel H. Fuller, Philadelphia).

*Men Nurses in Leper Asylums and Tuberculosis Sanatoria.* Designed for the treatment of acute cases, the T.B. sanatorium has become the cornerstone of prevention of this most damaging and widespread of all the major infections. The modern sanatorium must have the full confidence of the public. It requires adequate buildings and equipment, and above all a sufficient medical and nursing staff, well trained in the modern treatment of tuberculosis. No tuberculosis service is complete without the well-trained nurse. Since both the treatment and the prevention of tuberculosis are procedures which last for months and years and depend as much upon the co-operation of the patient as upon the skill of the physician, the nurse as a teacher and contact agent is indispensable. In order to get efficient service we see in our big sanatoria (T.B. Sanatorium, Madanapalle; Wanless T.B. Sanatorium, Miraj; T.B. Sanatorium, Pendra Road; etc.) men nurses employed with good results. The same may be said regarding the great work our men nurses are doing in the numerous leper asylums all over India.

### **Private Duty Nursing**

Private duty nursing is especially attractive to many young graduates and gives great satisfaction both to the patient and to the nurse as far as my experience goes. The reason for appointing men nurses lies chiefly in their efficiency, and secondly, most of the male patients are demanding men nurses to attend them.

### **Industrial Nursing**

This is a recent field for men nurses. Though the industrialisation of India is not yet far advanced, there might be in the near future a steadily increasing demand. As far as I know, most of our Indian nurses are called to Bahrein for industrial nursing. Special needs in nursing are required for each industry. While formerly the chief duty consisted in meeting emergencies and giving first aid, nowadays a new field of social work is open to the industrial man-nurse, who finds wide opportunities of teaching general hygiene and health to the worker and his family. The advantage of steady employment, a good salary and fixed working hours make industrial nursing an attractive career to the man nurse.



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### **Educational Nursing**

The same advantages pointed out above are offered to men nurses—especially in Mission hospitals—if they are capable nurses and seeking opportunity for responsibility and advancement. They are placed to supervise and instruct the junior nurses and orderlies and to give special care and treatment.

### **Men Nurses in Wartime and Emergency**

Both the Government and the T.N.A.I. are requesting men nurses to enrol in the event of national emergency, and it is a great pity that a cadre has not yet been created for war services. It is here that a special degree of physical fitness and strength is required, and therefore men nurses are best qualified to do the hard nursing work in our military hospitals as well as in the front lines of the battlefield.

### **Cooperation between Men and Women Nurses**

Although the purpose of this paper is to point out opportunities for men nurses, I would like to write about the good understanding in working relationship between men and women nurses. As far as my experience goes, this co-operation is perfect in our Mission hospitals, where men and women nurses are addressing each other with mutual respect as "brother" and "sister". It is easy to divide the work in a general hospital, following the rule: "Men's nursing is men's duty; women's nursing is women's duty." But difficulty may arise in emergency cases of either sex. Here, I believe, judging also from the moral point of view, it is easier for the man nurse to take care of a woman patient than *vice versa*.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we believe it is safe to say that men nurses have a distinct place to take in healing in India. Both in work distinctly for and with men and also in special types of nursing such as Mental Nursing, T.B. and Leprosy, Private, Industrial, General Institutional Nursing and Nurses' Training, the demand for men nurses is increasing, and it is significant that Government hospitals such as those in Madras are now entering seriously into the training of men nurses. There can scarcely be too many men nurses if one considers the great need which might arise in the event of national emergency for war services.

## **SCABIES? OH! SCRUB RUB**

*By Mr. Z. B. FRANKLIN, Male Nurse Compounder*

"Scabies"! Readers may just laugh at the heading and will not even care to look through this article. Well; we seldom know how complicating and troublesome scabies can be to a patient; and being such a simple thing the patients and we ourselves overlook it, till the patient can bear it no longer and draws our attention to its duration, which will be over a month or even years. Then, too, some of us just give some sulphur ointment into his hand and he applies it with no result, for one seldom thinks of exposing the parasite and attacking it straight. It is