

THE DEPARTMENT OF NURSING AND HEALTH IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, VANCOUVER, CANADA.

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A BRIEF history of the Department of Nursing and Health in the University of British Columbia may be of interest to those who are engaged in similar experiments in nursing education conducted under pioneer conditions.

The University of British Columbia is the youngest in the British Empire. It is only ten years old. Shortly before the outbreak of the war, buildings on an elaborate scale were planned, and indeed were actually commenced, on a magnificent site near Vancouver, the most important Canadian port on the Pacific coast. During the war all building activities were suspended and for ten years the sessions have been held in a group of wooden buildings known affectionately as "The Shacks" where, under truly abominable physical conditions, some fourteen hundred students are receiving instruction. Next year will see the opening of the new buildings at Point Grey, and in one of the most beautiful and dignified of them all—the Science Building—a small teaching unit is being planned to accommodate the Department of Nursing and Health.

To Dr. M. T. MacEachern, now Associate Director of the American College of Surgeons, we owe the establishment of the Department. In May 1919 he obtained the consent of the Senate and Board of Governors, and in October 1919 the writer assumed the dual position of Director of Nursing of the Vancouver General Hospital and Director of the Combined Course offered in the University. Three years later a separation of these duties became necessary and my services reverted to the University on a full time basis.

Before proceeding further, it may be well to give a general outline of the course as it now stands. No very marked changes have taken place since its incipency but nevertheless a certain modifical action is constantly going on which, it is hoped, will remedy the defects and weaknesses inevitable in the early stages of such an experiment in education.

The course now comprises five years of academic and hospital work. During the first year the student attends the session of the University on the same terms and under the same conditions as any other student. The required subjects are:

English 1.	Chemistry 1.
Mathematics 1, or Latin 1,	Biology 1.
or French 1, or History 1.	Nursing 1.
Physics 1.	

A word of explanation might be said regarding the choice of subjects. English, Physics, Chemistry and Biology are obviously good foundation subjects for any student in Nursing. The student is allowed a certain measure

of choice in the elective subjects. All things being equal she is recommended to take History as being a good background for the subjects required in the second year, *viz.*, Economics and History of Nursing. The total credit for the above courses is fifteen units. Nursing 1 is taken without credit and is a series of lectures dealing with the nature of hospital service and discipline and is designed to prepare the student for entering the School of Nursing.

In the summer interval between the first and second academic years the student enters the School of Nursing of the Vancouver General Hospital and takes the same four months' preparatory course that is given to the students in the ordinary three years' course. The Vancouver General Hospital has over nine hundred beds and offers a wide range of clinical experience. It affords, therefore, an excellent laboratory for the practical side of a course such as this which calls for shortened and intensive service in a number of departments. If the student reaches the required standard of efficiency she is formally accepted as a pupil nurse but proceeds to her second year of academic work before proceeding further with her nursing course.

The required subjects of the second year are as follows :—

English 2.	Philosophy 1.
Bacteriology 1 and 2.	Economics 1.
Zoology 1.	Nursing 2.

Most of the work in the second year is built upon that of the first. Philosophy 1 is a course in elementary psychology and is intended to prepare the student for the courses in Education given in the fifth year. Economics 1 gives an introduction to the work in practical sociology, also given in the fifth year. Nursing 2 is a series of lectures dealing with the history of nursing up to the commencement of the modern period.

At the close of the second academic year the student re-enters the School of Nursing and remains there for the remainder of her unexpired term of hospital service. Her total hospital service including the preparatory period is twenty-five and one half months divided into the following services :

Medical	.. 4 months.
Surgical	.. 4 "
Gynecological	.. 1 month.
Children	.. 1 "
Infants	.. 1½ months.
Infectious	.. 1 month.
Operating Room	.. 1½ months.
Obstetrical	.. 2¼ "
Diet Kitchen	.. 1¼ "
Tuberculosis	.. 1 month.
Eye, ear, nose and throat	.. 1 "
Miscellaneous and elective	.. 3 months.
Social service and out-patients	.. 1½ "
Vacations	.. 1½ "

Total .. 25½ "

A study of this table will reveal the attempt made to give a well rounded out training within the necessarily shortened period. Needless to say it includes some night duty.

In the fifth year the student, with the assistance of her advisers, selects one of two options—Teaching and Supervision or Public Health Nursing. Those electing the first named are required to take two courses in Education in the Department of Education, which is an integral part of the University. In addition she takes courses in the Teaching of Nursing Principles and Methods and in Contemporary Nursing Problems. She is also permitted to select one science such as Bacteriology or Biology and to take more advanced work in it than was afforded in the earlier years. Field work in teaching and supervision is arranged for in conjunction with the Vancouver General Hospital. Students choosing the Public Health option do not take the advanced work in Education but are required to take the courses above-mentioned in Teaching Principles and Methods and Contemporary Problems. Lectures are also arranged for them on the principles and practice of Public Health Nursing. Both groups are given lectures and clinics on Mental Hygiene. Field work in Public Health Nursing is arranged for through the co-operation of the Vancouver School Board, the Rotary Clinic for Diseases of the Chest, The Victorian Order of Nurses and other agencies. The Provincial Board of Health maintains two excellent rural Health Centres which give the students actual experience in the rural field.

At the conclusion of the fifth year the student is eligible for the academic degree of Bachelor of Applied Science and for the diploma in nursing granted by the Vancouver General Hospital. She is, of course, required to take the usual examinations for the title of Registered Nurse called for under the Provincial Act.

There has been a steady increase in enrolment. The first class had three members. There are now sixteen in the freshman year and a total of thirty-six taking the course. There have been many difficulties and much criticism, but we are living and learning, chiefly it is true, by many painful and costly mistakes.

It may be claimed, however, that some of the objectives of the course are in process of being attained. These may be summarised as follows :

- (1) The students in this course bring to the practice of Nursing a certain cultural background which is lacking in the majority of training school applicants who possess, at best, a high school education.
- (2) The previously unproductive years between Matriculation from High School and entrance into the School of Nursing are being put to most excellent use. The student is definitely preparing herself for nursing by a systematized course of study.

- (3) The student is given opportunity in her fifth year to follow her special bent and is definitely prepared for her chosen field of professional endeavour.
- (4) The presence of a Department of Nursing and Health in the University provides a focussing point for other educational activities among the nursing group. For example, Institutes for all branches of Nursing are conducted yearly, the members of the Provincial Board of Health Nursing Service hold their annual conference under the auspices of the Department, and in short the department functions as an educational centre for the nurses of the entire province.

It is too early to forecast the success or failure of this new departure in nursing education. Time alone will be the acid test. It is not to be expected that ready made competent executive officers, teachers or leaders can be produced by this or any other method of education. That is not the aim of the course. In this connection it may be of interest to quote from the general announcement of the Faculty of Applied Science to which the Department of Nursing and Health is attached :—

“The object is to turn out neither finished engineers nor industrial leaders—these are the products of years of development in the school of experience—but young men with a *special capacity and training for attaining this goal.*”

Translated into terms of nursing that is also the aim of the combined course.

In addition to the degree course described above, a course of one year in Public Health Nursing is also offered. This is open to graduate nurses in good standing who are eligible for registration in the province. It parallels closely the course of study, already described, taken in the fifth year by the degree students taking the public health option. It is especially designed to prepare students for the type of work they will be expected to perform within this province where pioneer conditions are likely to prevail in the outlying districts for some time to come.

The foregoing is a somewhat bald statement concerning an experiment which has not been without its difficulties and disappointments as well as its rosy hopes and real rewards. Of these I will say nothing. They are the lot of the pioneer.