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TRAINING OF NURSES

by

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In our consideration of training of nurses, the following questions seem to be relevant:

- What kind of nurses are needed? Psychiatric nurses or general nurses with psychiatric training and experience?
- How and where should they be trained?
- How could training programmes be developed?

The kind of nurses needed will depend upon the area where these nurses are going to practise. Namely, whether it is a general hospital with a psychiatric service; or a psychiatric hospital; or a general hospital. Therefore, we do need both psychiatric nurses and general nurses with psychiatric training and experience.

In a psychiatric hospital a psychiatric trained nurse is the nurse of choice. Simply because she is better equipped and better orientated for that type of nursing care in such an institution.

The psychiatric trained nurse, because of her special training, is well equipped to meet the needs of the psychiatric patients and consequently fulfil the objectives of psychiatric hospitals. Such objectives are stated in the Group Meeting on Mental Health, Alexandria, 1972. These objectives are aimed essentially towards rehabilitation and restoration of the patient

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to the community, as well as at socially stimulating the patient so as to prevent further deterioration of his condition.

The nurse who is going to be trusted in the implementation of these objectives must be well equipped and skilfully trained to be able to achieve and realise successfully these aims and objectives.

The patient in a mental hospital is affected not only by what is done for him but also by what is said to him, and indeed by how those tending him feel about him and behave in front of him. In short he is affected by the "atmosphere", whether it is "therapeutic" or unhealthy. One cannot overstress the "therapeutic" or otherwise effect of the atmosphere in which the psychiatric patient's treatment is carried out.

"The nurse tending the mentally-ill patients should acquire special skill; and to acquire such skill she will need certain qualities of personality and understanding of the nature of the human behaviour and of psychiatric disorders."

The personal qualities required as stated by Dr. B. Ackner can only be tested and proved after a lengthy period of training as required for the training of psychiatric nurses. This period will be the test-ground for tolerance and endurance inasmuch as it is necessary to acquire that special skill.

Although a post-graduate course for general nurses is available in Lebanon, only one mental hospital in Lebanon (one of three) employs psychiatric nurses with general training and experience. The other two depend more or less on auxiliaries with periodic support from psychiatric trained nurses.

Such states support the point of view that nurses with a basic psychiatric nursing diploma are able and willing to give the services required because of their special training, their skills and their personal qualities, in addition to the knowledge acquired from their academic education.

In the United States, where fifty per cent of the hospital beds are occupied by mentally-ill persons, the number of trained nurses tending these patients do not exceed five per cent of the total number of trained nurses employed (1961). This is of great interest when it is realised that a basic psychiatric training programme as such for nurses is virtually not in existence in the United States.

In the developing countries, if a reasonable number of trained psychiatric nurses are to be provided for a reasonably good care and satisfactory services for the mentally-ill, especially that the great majority of patients are cared for in mental institutions, a basic psychiatric training programme or programmes must be introduced to train available candidates.

The value of the general nurse with psychiatric training and experience

The need for this kind of nurse is becoming greater every day where her activity is confined to the nursing of psychiatric patients in general hospitals. She is no doubt giving an excellent service and valuable nursing care for the psychiatric patient in these hospitals.

Out of ten general hospitals in the city of Beirut approached for information, one was unresponsive. The other nine hospitals gave the following information:

1. They all admit and treat psychiatric patients provided they are manageable.

2. The ratio of psychiatric patients admitted varied between 0.5 % in one hospital to 6 % in another of the total number of admissions.
3. The number of psychiatric patients admitted to these hospitals is increasing every year.
4. None of these hospitals employs a trained psychiatric nurse.

This is a tremendous achievement by the general nurse who has no psychiatric training although her task and role are very much different from the role of the psychiatric nurse operating in a mental institution.

It was not possible for me to evaluate the type and level of patient care nor the results obtained with follow-ups.

I believe that developing and developed countries will need the services of both kinds of trained nurses for a long time to come.

The introduction of the psychiatric unit or wing in the general hospitals in some countries has not led yet to the disappearance of the psychiatric hospitals nor the abolishing of the basic psychiatric nurse training programmes, nor to any radical changes in the training programmes although this issue is constantly and continually under evaluation and study. Indeed, this shows clearly that the day has not yet arrived when basic psychiatric nurse training programmes will be a thing of the past.

Areas of training

A school of nursing which is attached or is a part of the psychiatric hospital or group of hospitals both general and psychiatric combined is the ideal setting for training of psychiatric nurses as well as for training of general nurses.

Where this is not possible because of administrative, financial or other reasons, a second best would be

1. A school of training of general nurses must be attached, or be a part of, the general hospital which has the necessary requirements for the training of general nurses.
2. A school of training of psychiatric nurses must be attached, or be a part of, a psychiatric hospital which has the necessary requirements for the training of psychiatric nurses.

The training of nurses should be planned and supervised by a nursing education committee. This committee should be chaired by a person experienced in education and administration, if possible, and must have a physician, a trained nurse and a nurse tutor among its members. The number of committee members should not be less than six.

The school principal or director must be a trained teacher with administrative experience if possible and must be supported by qualified or experienced teachers and specialist lecturers. Clinical teachers or qualified nurses must supervise the training of students in the units or wards during their experience outside the classroom.

The training ground should be the psychiatric hospital equipped and suitable for training. A period of not less than three months practical work with bedside instruction must be spent in a general hospital. The training must include experience in the outpatients clinic, health centre and home visits.

The training should be carried out in the country of the candidates, specially at the basic level, such as the training of the existing staff in psychiatric hospitals and at the level of the assistant nurse; and where possible the diploma and post-basic level. Where the possibilities for the training for the diploma or post-basic is not available in the candidate's

country, then the training can take place somewhere else, preferably where the candidate's language does not make his training difficult and where cultural differences are not an obstacle.

I am of the opinion that the field training of all candidates must be carried out in the country where he is likely to work (his country), and preferably in the same district where wide differences exist regarding the language as well as the social and cultural background of the population (e.g. south and north Sudan). I am certain that such training will make the nurse a better equipped one for helping her patients and can accomplish more if she speaks the same language as her patients as well as being familiar with their cultural and social background.

I am of the opinion that student nurses should be independent of the demands for the hospital services; but participation under guidance and supervision is an asset to the student nurse and a very valuable experience.

Development of a training programme

The development of a training programme for psychiatric nurses is difficult to define because of the tremendous differences that exist between the developing countries in question, namely the educational and cultural differences, as well as the availability of candidates.

A colleague of mine informed me that girls of the age of 13-14 years are being trained as general nurses in the Yemen Arab Republic and that they are doing well; my experience with this age group is limited to practical nurses, but not to trained nurse aids. On the other hand, the European agreement on the instruction and education of nurses states that in general student nurses should not come in contact with patients and with the hospital atmosphere until an age varying from 17-19 years, according to the country.

The availability of the student candidates, their educational standard, as well as the number of training centres and trained teachers and personnel, must be taken into consideration when one programme or more is being developed. Another significant point must be studied and rectified. That point is the very low ratio of the number of psychiatric nurses in certain countries. (A ration of 0.01 per 100 000 population is mentioned in the Group Meeting.)

However, in any planned basic psychiatric nursing programme the following areas must be included:

1. - History of nursing — nursing procedures and ward management.
- Human development. The behavioural pattern within the family and society.
- The roles of social and cultural factors in illness.
- Human behaviour in health and in sickness.
- Introduction to human biology in association with nutrition and first-aid.
- Dynamics of group behaviour.
- Introduction to psychiatric treatment.
- Nursing care and management of psychiatric patients and of patients undergoing psychiatric treatment.
- Introduction to physical disturbances and nursing care of physical illnesses.
- Therapeutic procedures.

The training period should not be less than three years. The standard as to the theoretical instruction and examination can vary considerably between one country and the other such standard will be raised as the general

educational standard of the candidates rises and the availability of student candidates increases.

Practical training should be carefully and thoroughly applied. "It is essential that the theoretical preparation of the psychiatric nurse must throughout be closely related to the practical therapeutic aspect of the work of a mental hospital and the mental health need of the community".

As it was found necessary by the Group Meeting to include teaching and experience in psychiatric nursing in the teaching programme of general nurses, I believe it is as important and essential to include teaching and experience in general nursing care in the teaching programme of psychiatric nurses.

"Although the emphasis is strictly on the role of the nurse in the psychiatric team, the need for a proper understanding of the physical functions of the body and physical care must not be overlooked".

2. An assistant nurse programme must be implemented specially where the ratio of all kinds of trained nurses is very low. Such a programme must be designed to give the candidate sufficient experience and knowledge so that she can participate to the fullest possible extent in all fields of nursing of psychiatric patients.

It should include theoretical training which can be correlated with practical experience whether in the hospital, clinic, outpatient hospital or the patient's home.

Such a programme may be of one or two years' duration, according to the points previously mentioned, and must cover the following areas:

- The function of the nurse
- The function of the hospital, clinic, etc.

- Nursing ethics, historical survey, nursing procedures
- The patient as an individual
- Special care, physical and psychological
- Community care, including rehabilitation

3. A six-month programme is a necessity. It must be similar in principle to the assistant nurse programme. Its aim is to train all the existing "nursing" personnel in mental institutions, whatever their educational standard or how old they may be.

Every person employed in the nursing service must benefit from this type of training. Instruction may be given by trained instructors or by qualified nursing staff, and the duration must be not more than six months.

An assessment is then made and promising candidates may be encouraged to undergo further training as assistant nurses.

4. The last programme that may be recommended is a post-graduate course of one year's duration for the generally trained nurse who wishes to take up psychiatric nursing as a career.

The course must cover the areas not fully covered during her general nursing training. This post-graduate course must be encouraged and made attractive so that candidates may be tempted to take the challenge and enter the psychiatric nursing field.

Summary

1. Both kinds of trained nurses are needed:
 - a. The nurse with basic psychiatric diploma and training for the care and management of psychiatric patients in psychiatric institutions as well as in psychiatric units of the general hospitals, and

- b. the nurse with a general nursing diploma and psychiatric experience and training for nursing care and the management of psychiatric patients admitted to general hospitals.
2. The absence of the general trained nurse from the psychiatric hospital as shown in the survey mentioned necessitates the implementation of a basic psychiatric nurses training programme.
3. The school of nursing must be a part of the hospital where most of the field training and practical experience takes place.
4. Speaking the patients' language as well as being familiar with their cultural and social background is of tremendous importance. A point to be considered when candidates undergo field and practical training.
5. The nursing school, the hospital unit or ward, the outpatients clinic and the health centres as well as the patient's home must all be the ground of training where possible.

The training areas should be similar to all countries but the age of the candidates, as well as the educational standard and the standard of training, may vary according to the potentialities of the candidates and their availability.

6. Outstanding candidates must be encouraged and helped to undergo further training.
7. The training period must be as follows:
 - a. Post-basic diploma - not less than twelve months
 - b. Basic psychiatric diploma - three years
 - c. Assistant nursing certificate - 1-2 years
 - d. The six-month training programme for all nursing personnel with no qualifications.

Physical disorders and general nursing procedures must be included in all programmes of psychiatric training.

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