

Education for Care

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OPSOMMING

Professionele verpleegkundiges het 'n verpligting teenoor verpleegstudente om hulle die geleentheid vir betekenisvolle leerervarings te gee en om die talle oomblikke vir onderrig wat die informele leersituasie bied, ten volle te benut. Die klem val op die verduideliking van die fynhede van versorging en die noodsaaklikheid om van die gehalte en verskeidenheid persoonlike kontakte- die kritieke elemente in verpleegsorg — bewus te wees.

PROFESSIONAL nursing has its origins in man's fundamental need for health, and the primary focus of nursing education is on meeting these needs, while simultaneously fulfilling the expectations and needs of the aspirant nurse — a twofold, synergistic responsibility.

The caring function lies at the very heart of nursing practice — it is the magnetic force which attracts people to nursing and in the final analysis offers the greatest rewards and satisfactions.

To this end educational programmes are designed to develop the professional person as a safe practitioner with a sound grounding in the basic disciplines, aimed at the ultimate goal of caring for the human being in all his complexity.

The vast knowledge component is made manifest in skilled practice, as nurses meet the demands of both their instrumental and expressive roles. **Formal** programmes are systematically planned and **taught**, yet the abstract realm of ethical standards, attitudes, norms and values is more often **caught** in the informal, unstructured environment; a realm which contributes in large measure to the mastery of the nursing situation and to the confidence and security of both patient and nurse.

It is in the **informal** situation that nurses realise their professional function; in small group discussions, in face-to-face contacts. These situations are the media for profes-

sional growth and enrichment, for nursing is more than the performance of routine procedures or the acquisition of a host of facts — it is a synthesis of these two facets in an applied science.

Nurse educators have elaborated upon the formal approaches to curriculum design, the setting of objectives, the planning of teaching strategies and evaluation procedures. Nursing care plans and problem-oriented reports are among the tools directed at analysing the patient's individual needs, thus encouraging nurses to plan consciously to meet these needs. But there is an obligation to develop still further this dimension of the **conscious** focussing of attention as an essential element in nursing education. **Identifying** and making **explicit** the qualities which are the essence of good nursing care. In this sphere every nurse has the potential to be an inspired teacher — verbalising the subtleties of caring, capturing for students the basic elements of their professional heritage, so easily overlooked, and lost to the young student of nursing.

Nursing education should offer **meaningful** learning experiences, and it is the practical setting which gives meaning to the theoretical component. Teachers and students should be acutely aware of each practical period as being an outstanding learning opportunity, designed to be appreciated by each participant.

Nursing is more than a Technique

Skilled nursing techniques are not purely manual or mechanical skills, each act includes a range of perceptual skills; skills of observation and interpretation, interpersonal skills — communication and teaching skills, skills of judgement and decision making — in using oneself as a therapeutic agent.

Contacts with clients and patients offer not only training in skills, but also the opportunity to acquire first hand knowledge of a wealth of disease conditions and to develop insight into the social and emotional components of man's behaviour.

Today no applied technical education could be considered adequate for the level of analytical thought and judgement expected of the independent nurse practitioner functioning in a dynamic total health care milieu.

To meet man's unique and complex needs the professional nurse seeks scholarship in nursing, rooted in the academic education of a well rounded cultured person.

Nursing is Thinking

A broad-based professional knowledge lays the foundation for reasoned care. Understanding and interpreting data preparatory to making a diagnosis for care, demand **thinking** as the vital element in patient assessment, similarly in appraising one's own achievements and acknowledging one's weaknesses.

Care stems from concern about people, from truly seeing, and really listening. It is necessary that these thought processes should be brought to conscious levels and that they be imparted to the uninitiated who would otherwise remain oblivious of their implications for nursing intervention.

Diversity in Nursing

In their practice students should be introduced to the vast range of situations in which they will be expected to function — sampling the highly technical skills of the operating theatre; participating in diagnostic procedures; handling the life-saving hardware.

Seeing in one person the ability to take over in an emergency; to resuscitate; to direct the efforts of the team; at once a scientific practitioner — administering intravenous fluids; handling dangerous drugs with calm efficiency; contributing to the deliberations of the physician; directing nursing management and in a more empathic context equally able to discuss social problems, advise on infant feeding or comfort the bereaved.

The learner must be aware of the contrasting roles of the nurse as instrumental and expressive leader, perceiving the appropriateness of action and gauging the quality of the relationship, for herein lies **the art of nursing**.

As part of the educational requirement the student should witness the nurse functioning as consultant and advisor, as co-ordinator and initiator of care, as a resource person and change agent. It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that such components are deliberately included in the learning experiences of students.

A multiplicity of images are projected by the teacher which have a profound effect on the development of the neophyte, on patient care, on community acceptance and professional worth.

Education in Practice

The patient, his family, his records, provide a wealth of stimulating information. Observations which are automatic, activities seemingly mundane — taken for granted — need to be given meaning. More than registered nurses ever realise the young student must be guided to see the significance in, for example, a name and address — encouraged to conjure up a mental picture of the city area, probable environment, social and economic strata in which the person lives and works. The student must be taught to equate the patient's circumstance with the possible concomitants of loneliness, nutritional deprivation, the need for assistance in the routines of daily living. Students enjoy "discovering" their patients, learning to know them as people, sharing their joys and anxieties; this is sociology and psychology applied and recognised as a real and vital part of expert care.

Under the direction of a wise and resourceful teacher the awareness of reality will be sharpened and the students actions goal-directed. In this manner students will discover the relevance of new knowledge, which will prompt their interest and desire to excel in giving responsible personal care. They will experience the rewards which stem from small acts of consideration, and become conscious of the comfort they give when dimming a light or proffering an iced drink. Their strength will grow in the degree of sensitivity which they bring to the caring process.

Expertise is conveyed in **contact** between the generations, professional skills are not learnt in isolation, but are transferred in the **teachable moments** which permeate each day. Such moments should be utilised with conscious intent to demonstrate the finer nuances of person-centred care.

Through involvement with professional nurses, students should experience the levels of stress and anxiety which compound nursing practice and be aware of the emotional bombardment which they will have to handle. They must be able to express their hopes and fears and feel free to discuss, with a competent person, their distress without loss of dignity. Young nurses need specific assistance in developing their own coping mechanisms, they look to the wisdom of their professional colleagues for positive guidance in their efforts to reach maturity in their professional adjustments.

In this harsh materialistic, technological milieu nurse educators must be ever mindful of their grave responsibility to convey the intangible values of the profession through meaningful interpersonal contacts. Accountability and commitment, love and loyalty, kindness and compassion — these are the critical elements in caring.

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