



Technical Guide - Mental Health and Nursing Units

The following statements have been agreed by Mental Health and Nursing as a guide in joint activities and in advisory services to countries.

1. Basic education for nursing should include
  - (a) theory and practice in psychiatric\* nursing
  - (b) integration of mental health concepts throughout the programmeThe purpose of this is to enable the nurse to give total nursing care to patients, to families and to groups.
2. A sound education for general nursing provides the basis for preparation in nursing specialties, e.g. paediatric nursing, psychiatric nursing, obstetric nursing. Preparation in the speciality should be given in a well planned educational programme combining both theory and practice. The special training in psychiatric nursing should prepare the nurse:
  - (a) to practise as a psychiatric nurse, i.e. to give nursing care to the mentally ill; to participate in community health programmes of prevention of mental illness, treatment, rehabilitation, after care, follow-up.
  - (b) with adequate additional preparation in administration and/or teaching to:
    - (i) assume administrative responsibility for nursing services in psychiatric units and mental health agencies;
    - (ii) teach mental health and psychiatric nursing to all levels of nursing personnel.
3. For developing countries not having an established pattern for the preparation of psychiatric nursing personnel, WHO should advise the

\* In this statement "psychiatric nursing" should be interpreted as including both mental health nursing and psychiatric nursing.

preparation of two levels of such personnel for psychiatric services:

- (a) a specialist in psychiatric nursing prepared as suggested in 1 and 2 above. These nurses should be prepared to work directly with psychiatric patients, but, since the number of such qualified people will necessarily be small in most countries, they will be chiefly in positions of teaching, supervision, consultation and administration.
  - (b) an auxiliary in psychiatric nursing. This group should be prepared in a planned programme suited to the needs of the country. They should work under the supervision of a qualified psychiatric nurse. In most countries this group will constitute the largest number in the psychiatric nursing service.
4. Programmes of in-service-education of nurses and auxiliaries already on the staff of psychiatric hospitals, clinics, public health agencies, and general hospitals, should be planned and implemented.
  5. Public health nurses have an important role to play in the mental health programme. They must be adequately prepared for a role which involves team membership. Supporting services to enable them to fulfil this role must be provided. Their role includes:
    - (a) Case finding - recognition of mental health hazards and study of the inherent, and the environmental factors, which commonly influence the behaviour of the individual.
    - (b) Motivation of the individual and his family to seek adequate care.
    - (c) Helping the patient to accept and follow health guidance.
    - (d) Interpretation of the patient to the appropriate specialist - preparation of accurate and significant reports regarding observation of patient, the patient's family, manner of living, attitudes and behaviour, environment.
    - (e) Mobilization of the environment (family, friends and health resources) for the benefit of the patient.
    - (f) Joint work with other health agencies in community health programmes of prevention of mental illness, treatment, rehabilitation, after care and follow-up.

- (g) Active participation in the development of community resources for mental health and in fostering community interest and support.

6. In relation to programmes of assistance:

- (a) Projects concerning psychiatric nursing are the joint responsibility of the Mental Health and Nursing Units at Headquarters and of the Advisers responsible for Mental Health and Nursing in the Regions. Liason is maintained with the Division of Education and Training at Headquarters and with the Educational Advisers in the Regions.
- (b) Mental Health projects in which the nurse has a role, call for joint consultation between Mental Health and Nursing Units at Headquarters and of the Advisers responsible for Mental Health and Nursing in the Regions. The same liason referred to in (a) above is maintained.
- (c) WHO nursing should consider:
  - (i) placing increased emphasis on the integration of the specialized activities of mental health in all nursing services and on the role of the psychiatric nurse for preventive as well as therapeutic and rehabilitation work.
  - (ii) assisting national nurses in their responsibilities for the overall planning of nursing services and nursing education within the national health administration to include consideration of nursing needs of mental health programmes (including psychiatric hospitals or psychiatric departments of general hospitals).
  - (iii) assisting national nurses with the establishment of educational programmes for psychiatric nurses.
  - (iv) encouraging national nurses to obtain advanced preparation in mental health and psychiatric nursing and in research methodology and to participate in research pertaining to mental health.
  - (v) assisting national nurses to find their place within

inter-disciplinary mental health teams which might include physician, nurse, social worker, psychiatric social worker, occupational therapist and other professional personnel.