

# THE B.Sc. (N) GRADUATE AS A NURSE PRACTITIONER

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Since the beginning of the basic baccalaureate programme in McGill University, the overall goal has been to prepare nurses who are capable of giving thoughtful nursing care to patients in any situation.

The curriculum was devised to ensure sufficient science content not only to fulfill the requirements for the degree, but also to enable the student to develop a scientific approach to nursing. The emphasis is on the way the student learns to nurse rather than on the nursing skills she acquires. This, to us, is the key to baccalaureate education in nursing. It also allows us to say that our graduates have potential as nurse practitioners that will help them to develop nursing in response to the need for health services.

Three years ago, we implemented a revised curriculum in accordance with changes in general education in Quebec. Students who enrolled in 1971 were enthralled with the literature pertaining to the nurse practitioner. In the announcement for the academic year 1971-72, a statement appeared which said that an internship would be planned for selected students following completion of the program. (This was initiated in 1972 and is described in the previous article). This paper relates, then, to the three years of the basic curriculum preceding the internship, which is now available for approximately one-third of the class.

The science component of the curriculum is composed of a minimum of 30 credits of biology, chemistry, physics and calculus taken as part of the sixty credits for the collegial diploma which is required for entrance into the university. Students take a minimum of 24 credits in science courses of the 90 credits required for the baccalaureate degree.

In the first nursing course, the development of the skill of observation as a professional tool is emphasized. The use of medical apparatus such as sphygmomanometer and stethoscope as extensions of the student's senses is encouraged. As the year progresses students become adept in using a stethoscope to listen to chests of pre- and post-operative patients whose surgery is elective. They learn to assess the effect of the patient's efforts to deep-breathe and cough. If the

patient's course is normal, the student has experienced hearing how healthy lungs sound. Some patients develop a post-operative pneumonia which allows the student to hear one type of lung sound related to illness. In brief, a student can use what was formerly thought to be exclusively medical examination to enhance her assessment of what is exclusively nursing — that of persuading the patient of the importance of deep breathing and coughing in relation to anaesthesia. If the student is able to use her science background as a way of learning to nurse, there is no problem in her study. Teachers select patients to increase the complexity of study each year. Students move from acquiring skills to assessing the outcomes of their plans. Their knowledge base continues to expand as questions are asked of their general courses which they then apply to the professional courses. By the third year, the student really focuses on examination of what is health to the individual and how he is maintaining that health. Families are also involved and this allows for an in-depth look at the variables which influence health.

Throughout the program, the student has had to develop interpersonal relationships which foster the type of milieu which supports the study of nursing. A basic baccalaureate student really "swims against the tide". She is a minority in the nursing world. She is prepared to be a responsible person in our society. Her satisfaction at the moment comes from patients. Slowly, the health professions are recognizing the worth of helping the person learn versus demanding repetition of a more traditional type of nursing performance.

There is some doubt that we need great numbers of nurse practitioners!(1) I would personally agree that we need to look carefully at this phenomenon as it mushrooms. However, there is no doubt that the baccalaureate nurse is needed in ever greater numbers not only to practise as a nurse practitioner, to do what has not ever been done for people in general in relation to health, but also to do what has not been done in nursing owing to the small number of persons prepared in basic baccalaureate programs.

#### *Reference*

1. J. E. Lynaugh and B. Bates. "Physical Diagnosis: A Skill for All Nurses." *American Journal of Nursing*. Vol. 74, No. 1, (Jan., 1974) pp. 58-59.