

THE BACHELOR OF NURSING PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The School of Nursing at the University of Calgary was established in 1969 and admitted its first class of students in the fall of 1970. Although these events predate the work of the Department of National Health and Welfare Committee on Nurse Practitioners chaired by Thomas J. Boudreau, the philosophy of the School is remarkably consistent with the views expressed in that Committee's report. This is probably not surprising given the increasing interest shown by the nursing profession in the changing role of the nurse in society.

The purpose of the School is to prepare nurses who are qualified to assume first-level positions in professional nursing. To this end the program is designed to provide students with the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills about, and a sensitivity to and understanding of, basic personal, social and professional problems and situations with which the nurse-citizen will have to cope.

The Bachelor of Nursing program at the University of Calgary is a four-year integrated program and is arranged so as to provide general education along with a professional component. By general education, we mean that a substantial number of the courses are selected from the humanities and the social, behavioral, biological and natural sciences, and these are taken concurrently with the nursing courses throughout the four years of the program.

The professional component of the program is based on the developmental approach. The beginning term of the first year emphasizes the discipline of nursing, a beginning understanding of nursing as a profession and its relation to the historical developments of the past and nursing today. This part of the course also deals with communication skills, such as observation, interviewing and interaction with the patient and his/her family or other significant persons. Two hours of laboratory per week are planned in order to provide experiences with these communication skills.

The second term deals with basic concepts, such as the family, the individual and the community. Concepts related to health-illness and the nursing process are also introduced. Students at this time are in the clinical areas for eight hours per week in a hospital and community setting where they are able to implement significant tasks of nursing, such as assessment of the patient's physical health, his environment, his perception of the illness and changes in his role as a sick person, etc. This also includes simple nursing measures, such as

providing comfort care (bed bath, back rub, etc.), assessing vital signs, communicating with the patient and his family. Each student is also assigned to a healthy, functioning family. The objectives for this experience at this time are to understand the dynamics of a healthy family, coping mechanisms of a family unit, a family's utilization of community resources in order to provide optimum care to its members. Understanding is also developed in group process by providing experiences under the leadership of a group leader in a lab setting. This enables students to understand group dynamics and develop sensitivity to each group member.

The second year of the program builds on the developmental framework. The emphasis during the first half of the academic year is on childbearing families, whereas, during the latter part, is on child-rearing families. Each student is assigned to a family where there is a pregnant woman in the last trimester of her pregnancy. The selection of a family is made with the consultation of the attending physician.

The emphasis is on the normal maternity cycle, factors influencing the outcome of a pregnancy with changing concepts in maternity nursing. The students gain understanding in the crisis theory, developmental tasks of pregnancy, role changes, tasks of new parents, integration of a new family member into a family, etc. The experiences are provided in the physician's office, patient's home, prenatal classes and hospitals.

Each student is expected to follow a single mother during pregnancy, through labor and delivery and the postpartum period. As a point of interest, the experiences continue with the same woman and her family during the child-rearing phase.

The skills acquired are: history taking, interviewing, physical assessment (vital signs, weight, urine testing, auscultation and palpation), nutritional assessment and counselling, and providing anticipatory guidance according to the assessed needs of a particular family. Students are also encouraged to involve any community support services, if necessary, in order to provide total care to the family under their care.

In the latter part of the second year, the objectives are geared to meeting the needs of child-rearing families and changing concepts in child care. Students develop understanding and appreciation of various child-rearing patterns, ethnic group differences and the role of parents in our contemporary society. They are assisted and encouraged to utilize the knowledge gained in developmental psychology in assessing the growth and development of children at different age levels, e.g. using Denver Developmental Screening Test. They are

also made aware of the supporting agencies, official and voluntary, in maintaining and encouraging the positive growth and development of children in a given community. Each student spends part of the clinical time in the paediatrician's office, well-baby clinic, pre-school screening tests in school (elementary and junior high) and studying agency structure and function in providing care for children with special problems. The clinical experiences are also provided in an acute hospital setting and long-term institution in order to understand the acute phases of patho-physiology in children along with implications of long-term illness to the child and his/her family. The emphasis is placed on changing concepts of child care in general and, in particular, in a hospital setting during this experience. The skills acquired are, again, of physical examination, interacting with children and parents, health teaching and various manual skills in order to provide total care to the child and his/her family.

In the third year of the School's program, the courses in nursing focus on the nursing care of adults. The emphasis is on the common illnesses (according to the Dominion Bureau of Vital Statistics) of adult life. The students develop understanding in the patho-physiology of different illnesses and specific nursing measures necessary. They also develop understanding and appreciation of developmental tasks of an adult, role changes with sickness, impact of illness on a family, etc. The philosophy and principles of mental health/psychiatric nursing are integrated from the first year of the program, but a significant number of hours are spent in understanding various mental health problems in the adult population of our society. Students' experiences are in general hospitals of the city, with careful selection of patients with acute episodes of illness and long-term illness. Experiences are also provided through the V.O.N. home care program, ambulatory care centres, physicians' offices, day care centres, and patients' homes. The skills which further develop are primary care skills, such as physical examination of an adult patient, interviewing and interacting with the patient, family and various health team members in planning care for the patient under their care.

The final year of the School's program involves student experiences which are planned with multiproblem families in the community who demonstrate a complexity of physical, cultural, social, economic, psychological and vocational problems. This includes a cross-section of problems representative of all age groups.

The nursing content further explores psychodynamics of family living, families and communities in poverty, group dynamics and group interaction, the interdisciplinary approach in delivery of health care systems, etc. The students develop understanding and skills re-

lating to physical health, nursing diagnosis, health maintenance, health promotion, management of common physical and emotional health deviations and development crisis solving. They also learn to function as part of a team in meeting all of the health needs of a specific situation.

During this final year they are involved in a course which attempts to help develop an effective and constructive approach to exploring issues and problems facing the nursing profession. Students are involved in identifying these issues and problems and then work in groups or individually on them. Extensive use is made of expert resource persons in the discussion of specific items. Some of the issues related to the development of the nursing profession which were explored this past year were the education of nurses for professional and technical roles, licensure, collective bargaining and the creation of change in bureaucratic organizations, to name a few. Other sessions have dealt with social issues and the general area of research.

In the light of the curriculum as designed, and experiences provided during the four years of the program, the graduates of this program should be able to function in various settings such as community health centres, ambulatory care centres, hospitals, nursing stations in isolated areas and wherever the delivery of health care is possible.

The graduates will have developed knowledge and skills relating to physical, emotional and psychosocial health, nursing diagnosis, health maintenance, and the promotion and management of common physical and emotional health deviations. They should also be able to assume responsibility in making independent and interdependent decisions regarding medical, nursing or other intervention required for a particular patient or a family.

In summary the baccalaureate program at the University of Calgary is striving to prepare nurse-citizens for a broader range of activities as they relate to the nursing profession in the light of changes in the delivery of health care in this country.