

CURRICULUM OF THE BASIC BACCALAUREATE DEGREE PROGRAM AT DALHOUSIE - MOUNT SAINT VINCENT

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The curriculum of the baccalaureate program in Nursing at Dalhousie University was instituted in 1968 and was modeled after the curriculum of the University of California at San Francisco (1). An intensive review of the curriculum was done in 1974-75. This review indicated that many adaptations have been made between 1968-1975. It is the purpose of this paper to describe the curriculum in operation during the 1975-76 academic year.

The curriculum is an integrated one built around four major concepts: Man, Health-Illness Continuum, Society, and Nursing — Practice and Process. Each of these concepts is emphasized in every year of the program, and appropriate sub-concepts are introduced to provide breadth and depth to the content.

Man as a holistic being is introduced in Year I as a member of a family and a member of a community. Normal growth and development of and within a healthy family is the area of content concentration. The concept of stress is introduced late in the year. Students visit individuals and families for the purpose of developing skills of assessment and communication. There are also visits to nursery schools and public schools to observe and assess growth and development. Process recordings are used as a learning/evaluation tool. Basic nursing skills such as vital signs, bathing, bedmaking, and feeding are learned in the skills laboratory and then are practiced in a variety of clinical settings — pediatric care, obstetric area, acute care facility and/or long term care institutions. Concurrent courses this year include chemistry, anatomy and physiology, and one Arts and Science elective.

In Year II the concept of stress is fully developed in the context of developmental and situational crisis. Specific stressors in the first category include pregnancy and parenthood. Experience in assessment and communication is provided by visits to families. Prenatal contact with labor and delivery follow-through and post natal visits is an example of interaction with a client and family

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experiencing a developmental crisis. In the area of situational crisis the illness concept is introduced as a reaction to stress — specifically, invasion and trauma. Man's internal environment is believed to be coping adequately; therefore, illness or disruptions studied in this year tend to be short term problems caused by external stressors. Manual skills such as injections, isolation, sterile technique, pre and post operative care are learned in the skills laboratory and are practiced as necessary interventions in any clinical area through which the student rotates. Process recordings, nursing history, and nursing care plans are learning/evaluation tools used in Year II. Chemistry, microbiology, developmental psychology, and one Arts and Science elective are also studied this year.

Year III continues the concept of illness in a framework of chronicity and rehabilitation. It considers Man as he reacts to internal stressors while the external environment remains stable. Specific stressors this year are metabolic, congenital, psychosocial, and degenerative. Clinical practice is planned to focus on clients and families with long term problems as might be found in chronic care facilities and in the home. Teaching tools and skills are basically the same as for Year II. Supporting courses are math (statistics), and two and one half Arts and Science electives.

Year IV completes the move from simple to complex by studying Man as he reacts to both internal and external environmental maladjustments. Complex health problems are examined within the framework of the community at large. Clinical experience is available in all types of settings. Brevity and accuracy are the hallmarks of the nursing care plans developed in Year IV predicated on the philosophy of Mayer (2). Students in Year IV also study research and current issues in nursing. Assessment of community needs in the Atlantic region indicate a need for basic courses in teaching and administration at the baccalaureate level. These are provided in the final year, and the student elects one or the other. Efforts are made to coordinate information in all nursing courses in this year so that reinforcement rather than repetition of content and concepts occurs.

In the statement of philosophy of the Baccalaureate Program in Nursing is the following definition of Nursing on which is built the nursing content:

Nursing is a process of action, reaction, interaction and transaction, whereby nurses assist individuals of any age and socio-economic group to meet their basic needs in performing activities of daily living and to cope with health and illness at some particular point in the life cycle. (3)

Nursing process is the methodology of practice accepted by the faculty and emphasized at all levels of the program. The problem-solving component is introduced early in first year and continues in depth and scope during subsequent years, culminating in the use of the Claus-Bailey decision-making model (4) in year IV. Planned nursing intervention and evaluation of interventions are begun in first year and continue at a progressively more complex level in the succeeding years. Some specific theories taught in relation to nursing process within this identified conceptual construct are: communication, development, need, change, learning, management, systems, role, stress, adaptation, crisis, and decision-making.

The curriculum at Dalhousie-Mount Saint Vincent is currently undergoing evaluation and revision. Attempts are being made to isolate the conceptual matrix so that a clearly defined framework can be developed. Integration defined by Torres as “. . . blending the nursing content in such a way that the parts or specialties are no longer distinguishable” (5) is the ultimate goal, and this kind of integration fits naturally into a conceptual framework. At present much of the content from the specialty areas is presented as individual (and identifiable) segments in the curriculum mosaic. The aim of the current revision is to have the segments so blended that what one sees is the whole picture and not the parts.

In summary, the Dalhousie-Mount Saint Vincent curriculum of the basic baccalaureate program is focused on Man as an individual in a family and a society at a given place on the health-illness continuum. The aim of nursing is the manipulation of Man's environment in order that he may attain and maintain his optimal level of health as he performs his activities of daily living. The process of assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation forms the basis for nursing practice. Current revision is underway to further identify and relate the concepts in this program to formulate a conceptual framework.

References

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3. Imogene King. *Toward a Theory of Nursing*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1971, p. 25.
4. June T. Bailey and Karen Claus. *Decision Making in Nursing*. St. Louis: C. V. Mosby, 1975.
5. Gertrude Torres. "Educational Trends and the Integrated Curriculum Approach in Nursing", in Faculty Curriculum Development, Part IV: *Unifying the Curriculum — the Integrated Approach*. New York: National League for Nursing, Publication #15 — 1522, p. 2.