

EDITORIAL: CHANGE AND GROWTH

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Although the School of Nursing at the University of British Columbia is the oldest university school in Canada, it had not grown to meet the needs of this province for nurses prepared at the baccalaureate level. The reasons for this are many and complex and will not be detailed here. Suffice it to say that this slow growth resulted in a small pool of nurses ready and able to proceed to the Master's degree and therefore a dearth of nurses prepared to teach, direct, consult and undertake research. The lack of leaders has hampered the growth of the profession in this province.

In 1971 the faculty of the School decided to attempt a drastic change in curriculum and in policy in order to increase the number of nurses with baccalaureate degrees. A behavioural system model for nursing was created as a guide to the curriculum, to nursing practice and to nursing research. The model was operationalized by a group of faculty during a year of strenuous labour. An entirely new approach to the teaching of nursing was developed. The core of the curriculum is the unique function of nursing, with emphasis on wellness and the prevention of illness. The emphasis in the teaching methods is on self-learning through the use of modern technological devices and learning materials devised by the faculty to fit the concepts of the new curriculum.

The programme was shortened from five years to four with two three-month summer terms following the first and second years. These summer terms provide for concentrated clinical practice. Students may write the registered nurse examinations any time after the second year summer term. They may then leave to practice as registered nurses and return to complete their degrees at a later date. To date, only one class of students has passed through this experience. Only a few availed themselves of the opportunity to leave. It appears that students who come to university come to take a degree and are not deflected from this course of action.

The obverse of allowing the undergraduates to write their registration examinations and leave is the admission of registered nurses to the third year. Those who qualify are given an admission examination and those who pass take a three-month Summer course. Both

the examination and the course require comment. The screening of students is not entirely satisfactory. We intend to produce a qualifying examination to replace the present purchased examination. The Summer course attempts to help registered nurses from hospital and community college schools to understand the stance of the university towards education and, in particular, nursing education. They are oriented to the university, the library and the School of Nursing's facilities, especially its biomedical communication department, and the means and methods of self-directed study. They are taught the conceptual framework as well as the nursing process used by the School, and given extensive clinical practice in their use.

The Master's programme is developed on the same model. It is two academic years in length and prepares students as clinical nurse specialists and/or as teachers, administrators and consultants.

As a result of the shortening of the total undergraduate programme and widespread publicity about the new programme the School has grown rapidly from 207 students in 1971 to 482 students in 1976. Senate has now established a quota for the B.S.N. programme; we will admit 113 students to the first year for the next five years. The Master's programme has also grown from 23 students in 1971 to 45 in 1976. No restraints will be placed on the growth of this programme, as British Columbia needs more nurses with advanced education.

Some aspects of the B.S.N. programme are described in this volume, though not all that we would have liked to include. The gravest omission is a description of the research and evaluation that are proceeding alongside the development of the programme itself.

We anticipate that an article on this aspect of our work will appear in subsequent issue of this journal.

Needless to say, this has been an exacting and challenging five years. The faculty have worked very hard to make this dream a reality; the students are working very hard making use of the faculty's creation. As with all growth and change it has been difficult and painful at times. We suffer all the problems associated with rapid growth and extensive change. Nonetheless, there is a sense of accomplishment and pride that pervades the School and enables us to overcome the difficulties inherent in the change process.

We realize that what we are doing is both experimental and controversial. We believe there is no right and final answer to the problems of nursing. It is clear, however, that the creation of a discrete and organized body of nursing knowledge demands a conceptual framework within which nursing knowledge can be arranged for

thought as well as for action. Such a science would enable research into the improvement of patient care to be conducted effectively thus increasing the available and proven knowledge. It is toward this end that we strive. Time alone will tell how successful we have been. The opinions of our colleagues across the nation would be much appreciated.