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# Students' awareness of the roles of auxiliary personnel who are members of the nursing team

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**STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF THE ROLES OF AUXILIARY  
PERSONNEL WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE NURSING TEAM**

By

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**A field study submitted in partial fulfillment  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The past two decades have shown many changes in the health institutions in this country. The population of the country has shown a steady increase and the people have been making more use of existing health facilities. Health insurance plans and improved standards of living have been important factors in the demand for increasing numbers of hospital beds. As health agencies have attempted to meet the demands of the public, they have needed more nurses to give care to the patients. Advances in medical knowledge have made the care of patients more complex.

As a result of the factors mentioned above, the means of providing nursing care for the patients has become a greater problem. Registered nurses, in sufficient numbers are not available for employment. Auxiliary personnel have been brought in to hospital settings to supplement the nursing care administered by registered nurses. In 1947 Mary Ella Chayer observed:

The profession of nursing has taken many steps in the right direction toward marshaling its forces

to meet the new demands of society. It is utilizing more economically its present nursing strength, and increasing the effectiveness of the more highly trained group by extending the use of workers expertly trained in specific areas but for a narrower range of responsibilities.<sup>1</sup>

The trend that Chayer mentioned has continued. In many hospitals today licensed practical nurses are being depended upon to administer a large proportion of the bedside nursing care. Another large group giving bedside care to patients are nursing aides who are prepared by the individual institutions. They have widely varying educational backgrounds and native abilities. The hospitals in their pressing need for persons to give bedside nursing care have set up programs to instruct interested individuals in selected skills necessary in the care of patients.

In view of the present situation in hospitals, it seems obvious that within the educational programs for professional nurses there should be provisions for the students to gain a clear understanding of the role of auxiliary persons in the nursing setting. The registered nurse of today is expected to direct, teach, and supervise the auxiliary worker.

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Ella Chayer, Nursing in Modern Society (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1947), p. 66.

### Statement of the Problem

This study was undertaken to ascertain what knowledge the professional student nurses in a specific hospital have in relation to the educational background of auxiliary persons, the preparation given to these persons and the level of performance which can be expected from them.

### Justification of the Problem

The National League for Nursing, in drafting the characteristics of a diploma program, stated that the graduates should be "able to plan for the care of patients with other members of the health team and may be responsible for the direction of other members of the health team."<sup>2</sup> Student nurses, therefore, need knowledge relative to the role of nursing auxiliary personnel. The results of this study may aid faculties in determining whether they should provide students with more planned learning experiences

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<sup>2</sup>National League for Nursing: Department of Diploma and Associate Degree Programs, Characteristic of Educational Programs in Non Collegiate Institutions Leading to a Diploma in Nursing (New York: October, 1960).



aimed at helping them gain clearer concepts of the level of performance which they can expect from auxiliary persons and the factors which may limit the performance of these people as members of the nursing team.

### Scope and Limitations

This study was made in a 320 bed general hospital located in a moderate sized city of New England. Forty-five freshman students, twenty-eight junior students and thirty senior students in a diploma program in nursing, participated in the study.

The tool used for the collection of data was a questionnaire which consisted primarily of true-false and best answer items. Following analysis of the data, the investigator felt that open ended questions would have made the results more valid as the opportunity for guessing would have been partially eliminated.

Since the study was limited to one school of nursing, it is not possible to conclude that the findings are applicable to other schools of nursing.

### Definition of Terms

In this report, the following terms will be used as here defined:

**Auxiliary Personnel**-----those persons who assist the professional nurse in administering nursing care to patients.

**Licensed Practical Nurse**--one who graduated from an approved educational program and is prepared to share in the care of the sick under the direction of a registered nurse and/or licensed physician.

**Nurses' Aide**-----one who had at least six weeks of full-time instruction followed by three months of supervised experience in specified skills which equip her to assist the professional and practical nurse in giving nursing care.

**Student Nurse**-----one who is enrolled in a three year diploma school of nursing and who will, upon graduation, be eligible for state examination to qualify as a registered nurse.

### Preview of Methodology

The data for this study were obtained from questionnaires which each student completed. The questions were aimed towards ascertaining the students' understandings of the educational background, nursing preparation and level of performance which could be expected from licensed practical nurses and nurses' aides.

Summary of Presentation

Chapter II contains the theoretical framework for the study and a review of the pertinent literature.

Chapter III gives a detailed account of the methodology used. The findings and their analysis are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V included the summary, conclusions and recommendations resulting from the study.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

#### Review of Literature

Although many studies have been conducted about the duties which auxiliary persons are assuming in hospitals, very little has been written in relation to the understandings and skills which the graduate nurse needs to have in order to work with and lead these people who are important members of the nursing team.

Johnson attempted to elicit attitudes which would reveal the degree of acceptance of each other by professional and practical nurses. Her hypothesis was that unfavorable attitudes, indicating that they have not been fully accepted by each other as co-workers, do exist between the professional and practical nurses. This hypothesis was supported although not to a great degree. She recommended that the data collected be used in staff education programs to promote better understandings by professional and practical nurses of each other's roles.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Eunice Evelyn Johnson, "A Survey to Elicit Attitudes Which Reveal the Degrees of Acceptance of Professional and Practical Nurses as Co-Workers in the Hospital" (unpublished Field Study, School of Nursing, Boston University), pp. 36-40.

At a workshop held at Boston University in 1952, Farrell defined what the professional nurse should be able to accomplish as a leader of a nursing team:

We have many kinds of persons concerned with the care of the patient. The foregoing illustrates the point that we secure different kinds of effects in accord with the kind of interaction we provide, or fail to provide, using the same people. If the professional personnel come together to pool their interprofessional insights, knowledges, skills, and resources, we tend to get more economical and effective results than if each one works alone. With the nursing team, the professional nurse team leader and her team members, setting together the objective of the patient's care; planning together what needs to be done to effect the objectives; determining who will do what and how to coordinate the parts each one plays; and appraising the results obtained together, we also tend to reach a higher level of effectiveness more economically than through individual assignments to tasks. A group works as a unit moving in unison toward an agreed upon goal, quality care for the patient.<sup>2</sup>

Students in nursing who will be able to function upon graduation in the manner described above need a comprehensive understanding of the abilities and preparation of the various members of the nursing team.

A series of studies at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center reported by George and Kuehn were focused

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<sup>2</sup>Marie Farrell, "Defining a Team" in Report of Workshop on Team Concept in Nursing, School of Nursing, Boston University, June 23-July 31, 1952, General Session I.

on the more effective utilization of personnel, both professional and non-professional, in relation to the capacity, educational background, and experience of each. These studies were undertaken to find some answers to the question of how to provide adequate nursing care to the American people under the circumstances that exist today. In their conclusions the authors stated that they felt that programs preparing professional nurses needed a curriculum which would provide more skill in communication and more understanding of human relations.<sup>3</sup>

In a study of the practices used in orienting staff nurses, O'Boyle interviewed fifty-four full time staff nurses from ten hospitals. Nurses who were students in the particular hospital or those who had had a previous employment in the hospital were excluded from the study. Upon completion of her research O'Boyle made the following statement:

The findings of this study suggest that many recent graduates as well as older nurses have not been prepared to assume the leadership and supervision of

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<sup>3</sup>Frances L. George and Ruth P. Kuehn, Patterns of Patient Care. Some Studies of the Utilization of Nursing Service Personnel (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), pp. 1-176.

non-professional nursing personnel which is frequently required of general duty professional nurses. This lack of preparation warrants the attention of nursing educators so that provision is made for the student nurse to receive experience and guidance in the exercise of leadership on the nursing team.<sup>4</sup>

Newton also implied that student nurses are not prepared to assume leadership responsibilities in relation to non-professional personnel when she wrote:

The whole pattern of nursing has had to change in the last 15 years. Instead of doing things for and to patients directly, nurses must now work with patients, and other personnel in planning and executing the care of patients. This means that students and staff nurses who are members of the nursing team must develop their own leadership potential; skill in using human relations is needed to guide and supervise others.<sup>5</sup>

Most catalogues from the three year diploma schools state that they are preparing students to become good bedside nurses. These catalogues indicate that very few schools give consideration to the administrative and leadership roles played by a staff nurse in the hospital setting today. It is, of course, possible that some of

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<sup>4</sup>Myrtle O'Boyle, "A Study of Practices in Orienting Staff Nurses" (Published Master's Thesis, Graduate School, University of Washington) Published by National League for Nursing in the League Exchange, No. 15, pp. 9-82.

<sup>5</sup>Mildred E. Newton, "Developing Leadership Potential," Nursing Outlook, Vol. 5 (July, 1957), 400.

knowledge that a staff nurse needs is integrated into the curriculum as a whole.

In Massachusetts the Approving Authority for Schools for Nurses set up a Minimum Curriculum and Syllabus in 1944 in which was outlined the required course content for schools of nursing in the state. No course outline made provision for helping the student in nursing to gain understandings of the roles of other nursing personnel.<sup>6</sup>

Brown suggests a program of study in basic nursing for three year diploma programs. During the first year, in addition to the traditional courses, she suggests a course in Communications Skills. Courses such as this could be helpful to the student who is preparing to work not only with patients but with many other people in a variety of roles. Brown does not suggest any other courses or experiences which would specifically prepare the student to function as a leader of other members of the nursing team.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Minimum Curriculum and Syllabus for Schools of Nursing, Issued by the Approving Authority for Schools for Nurses, May 18, 1944.

<sup>7</sup>Amy Frances Brown, Curriculum Development (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1960), pp. 61-75.



The members of the faculty of the School of Nursing of the University of Washington under the leadership of Ole Sand participated in a thorough and cooperative analysis of the professional curriculum. As one of its first undertakings the faculty set up objectives for the total program. One objective pertained particularly to the problems being investigated. The faculty stated:

The School of Nursing endeavors to develop a nurse who is a responsible professional person, as an individual and as a member of the health team and who is capable of maintaining effective interpersonal, professional, and interprofessional relationships.

The implied behavior is that she:

1. Maintains effective interpersonal and interprofessional relationships with individual members of the health team, with patients and members of the patient's family, with members of the nursing profession, and with professions and groups not directly related to health.
2. Understands the qualifications for various levels of nursing.
3. Participates in the activities of her professional organizations.
4. Appreciates and begins to evaluate the contributions of the others (health team).
5. Appreciates the need for information about the functions of groups of workers concerned with the care of the patient.
6. Interprets herself and her functions to others<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ole Sands, Curriculum Study in Basic Nursing Education (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1955), pp. 27-28.

### Basis of Hypothesis

The above evidence indicates that staff nurses need to assume leadership responsibilities in relation to auxiliary personnel and that many staff nurses are not prepared to fulfill this responsibility. The evidence also indicates that nursing educators have not given adequate consideration to the preparation of the student in relation to the responsibilities she will inherit as a staff nurse in the average hospital in this country.

It is unfortunate that within the curriculum for diploma students provision is usually not made for them to study the role of auxiliary personnel. Beginning staff nurses need knowledge of the contribution that all nursing personnel are able to make toward the care of the patient.

### Statement of Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study was that students have very limited knowledge of the role of auxiliary personnel with whom they will work as graduate nurses in planning for patient care.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Selection and Description of the Sample

The data for this study were collected in a three year diploma school of nursing which was accredited by the National League for Nursing. A total of 105 students were enrolled in the school and 103 of them participated in the study. There were thirty seniors, twenty-eight juniors and forty-five freshmen. One junior student and one senior student were on leave from the school and were not included in the study.

The students in this school had had the majority of their clinical experience in the home hospital. A psychiatric affiliation was the only experience where instruction was given at another institution.

At the time the data were collected, the freshmen students had completed seven months of the program. They were spending approximately twenty hours per week in class and having from three to four hours a week in clinical practice on medical-surgical units. A course in

Fundamentals of Nursing included discussion of the roles of all members of the health team. Instructors planned the clinical assignments. Patients were selected for whom the students were ready to give nursing care by the case method. The students had limited contacts with other ward personnel.

The junior students had completed nineteen months in the school. The majority of them were having clinical experiences in surgery, obstetrical nursing or pediatric nursing. They had an average of twenty-eight hours of experience and six hours of related instruction per week. All junior students had had a supervised evening or night duty experience.

The senior students at the time of the study had completed thirty-one months of the program. They were having approximately twelve hours of class per week and sixteen hours of advanced clinical experience in medical-surgical nursing. Half of the students in the senior class had completed a course entitled Fundamentals of Management and Teaching in Clinical Areas. Related clinical experiences were planned in conjunction with the course which was designed to increase the effectiveness of the student as a member of the health team by deepening her understanding of the responsibilities of the

staff nurse in relation to nursing service and nursing education. One objective of the course was to help the student develop a greater understanding of the roles of various groups of hospital personnel. During clinical laboratory periods, the students had opportunity to observe auxiliary workers and to evaluate their performance. Students who had had this course were requested to so indicate on their questionnaire. All senior students had been assigned to some evening and night duty experience during which an instructor usually was with them.

This hospital employed licensed practical nurses and nurses' aides to assist the nurses in providing nursing care to patients. Licensed practical nurses and nurses' aides were assigned to all units with the exception of the unit for acutely ill patients. At the time of the study, the hospital employed 72 full time and 85 part time registered nurses for staff nursing, 24 full time and 10 part time licensed practical nurses and 33 full time and 2 part time nurses' aides. Another category of auxiliary personnel employed were nurses' helpers. Two or three of these persons were assigned to each floor. They did not give direct care to patients and were, therefore, excluded from the study. Student practical nurses affiliated at the hospital for a period of ten months. They had

supervised practice in medical-surgical nursing, obstetrical nursing, pediatric nursing and diet therapy. An instructor who was in no way connected with the diploma school was responsible for the instruction and supervision of these students.

#### Tool Used to Collect Data

To obtain information regarding the knowledge that students in this school of nursing had in relation to the educational background, preparation and performance which could be expected from auxiliary personnel, a questionnaire was devised. The questionnaire was chosen as it seemed to be the most effective way to obtain the above data from all students currently enrolled in the program. The questions were worded in a simple direct manner. All questions but two could be answered by a check or by encircling an alternative. The material was adequately spaced. The questionnaire was duplicated on a "ditto" machine. Each copy was easy to read.

The measuring tool<sup>1</sup> was divided into two sections. Section one pertained to licensed practical nurses and section two, to nurses' aides. Each section was

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix.

subdivided into three parts. The first part of each section contained best answer items which referred to educational background and were included to ascertain what knowledge the students had of the limitations in educational background of most auxiliary personnel who enter the training courses. The second part of each section was composed of best answer questions and one free response question which were specifically concerned with the type of preparation which the two categories of personnel received, to find out if the students knew the amount of instruction and practice that licensed practical nurses and nurses' aides had. Part three of each section pertained to level of performance and contained a check list of procedures and true-false questions. These items were included to test the students' knowledge of the type of care the two groups were prepared to give.

The items relating to preparation of nurses' aides were specific to the aide training program conducted in the hospital in which the study was done. Those relating to education of practical nurses were based on the program offered by the local school for practical nurses, whose graduates constituted the majority of licensed practical nurses employed in the hospital. The questionnaire was checked for accuracy by the instructor of auxiliary personnel and the instructor of practical nurse

students. Each student was asked, however, to indicate her class and senior students were instructed to indicate if they had had the course in Fundamentals of Management and Teaching in Clinical Areas.

#### Procurement of Data

The data were collected in one day. A schedule was arranged so that all freshmen assembled at one hour, juniors at another, and the seniors at still another. The meetings with the students were booked in this manner to lessen the possibility of discussion of the content of the questionnaire between the members of the various classes. The students were told only that the investigator wished to meet with them in relation to a study which she was doing. No other information was given them.

The purpose of the questionnaire was explained at the beginning of the period and students were told the papers would not be identified with individuals. Students were requested not to guess the answer to a question if they were sure that they did not know the correct answer. They were, however, encouraged to answer all questions to which they thought they might know the correct answer. The junior and senior students answered the questionnaire without inquiry. They seemed to give serious consideration



to the questions. The freshman students asked for more clarification relative to what the investigator was trying to prove. They indicated concern that they did not know the answers to questions. Most students completed the questionnaire in twenty minutes.

The questionnaires from the three classes were treated separately. One point was allowed for each item the students answered correctly. The highest possible score was fifty-eight. The papers were tabulated in relation to the scores students received on their knowledge of the educational background, preparation and level of performance of practical nurses and nurses' aides. A comparison was made of the responses of senior students who had had the course in Fundamentals of Teaching and Management in Clinical Areas with those senior students who had not had the course. The three classes were compared as to their level of understanding in relation to the persons filling these two roles.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND DESCRIPTION OF DATA

The total possible score on the questionnaire was fifty-eight. All students knew at least half of the possible correct answers.

Table 1 indicates that the senior class had the highest mean and the freshman class had the lowest mean. There was a difference of 1.94 between the means of the junior and senior classes, whereas the difference in means between the freshman and the senior class was 8.66. Sixty-eight of the students obtained scores between forty and forty-eight. The mean for all classes was 42.65.

TABLE 1  
DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON QUESTIONNAIRE  
AND MEAN FOR EACH CLASS

Scores	Freshmen	Juniors	Seniors	Totals
52-54			1	1
49-51			4	4
46-48	3	9	11	23
43-45	3	12	9	24
40-42	10	6	5	21
37-39	13	1		14
34-36	7			7
31-33	3			3
28-30	6			6
N	45	28	30	103
Mean	37.53	44.25	46.19	42.65

Table 2 shows that senior students had the highest mean in the questions pertaining to knowledge relative to the educational background of licensed practical nurses. The mean of the senior students' scores was only slightly higher than the mean of the scores of the junior students. The mean in per cent for senior students was 71 compared with a mean in per cent of 70 for junior students.

TABLE 2  
SCORES ON TEST ITEMS RELATING TO EDUCATIONAL  
BACKGROUND OF LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES

Class	Highest Possible Score	Range of Scores	Mean	Mean in Per Cent
Freshmen	4	0-4	2.17	54
Juniors	4	0-4	2.79	70
Seniors	4	0-4	2.85	71

The students' knowledge relative to the preparation of licensed practical nurses is compared in Table 3. The senior students again showed more knowledge in this area. The lowest score for freshmen was two and the lowest score for seniors was five. There was a greater difference in the mean of junior scores as compared to the mean of senior scores in this section than in any other section of the

questionnaire.

TABLE 3  
SCORES ON TEST ITEMS RELATING TO PREPARATION OF  
LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES

Class	Highest Possible Score	Range of Scores	Mean	Mean in Per Cent
Freshmen	10	2-9	5.51	55
Juniors	10	3-8	5.78	58
Seniors	10	5-9	6.86	69

Table 4 shows that the students had a fairly good knowledge of the level of performance which could be expected from licensed practical nurses. The students in both the junior and senior classes attained a mean of 86 per cent. Freshmen students achieved a mean of 74 per cent.

TABLE 4  
SCORES ON TEST ITEMS RELATING TO EXPECTED LEVEL  
OF PERFORMANCE FROM LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES

Class	Highest Possible Score	Range of Scores	Mean	Mean in Per Cent
Freshmen	17	6-17	12.55	74
Juniors	17	12-16	14.67	86
Seniors	17	12-17	14.58	86

Tables 2, 3 and 4 indicate that all students had considerably more knowledge relative to the level of performance which could be expected from licensed practical nurses than they had about their educational background and preparation. The students made very few errors in checking procedures, which the practical nurses could be expected to perform. They made most of their errors on the true-false items which pertained to performance but were not procedure-centered.

Senior students knew more about the educational background of nurses' aides than students in the other two classes. This is shown in Table 5. The mean in per cent was 41 for seniors compared with 36 for juniors and 32 for freshmen.

TABLE 5  
SCORES ON TEST ITEMS RELATING TO EDUCATIONAL  
BACKGROUND OF NURSES' AIDES

Class	Highest Possible Scores	Range of Scores	Mean	Mean in Per Cent
Freshmen	3	0-2	.95	32
Juniors	3	0-2	1.07	36
Seniors	3	0-3	1.23	41

Table 6 indicates that the students had a fair knowledge of the preparation which nurses' aides receive. The seniors had a mean of 69 per cent and the juniors a mean of 65 per cent. The mean for freshmen was considerably lower at 47 per cent.

TABLE 6  
SCORES ON TEST ITEMS RELATING TO PREPARATION  
NURSES' AIDES

Class	Higest Possible Scores	Range of Scores	Mean	Mean in Per Cent
Freshmen	5	0-5	2.35	47
Juniors	5	1-5	3.25	65
Seniors	5	2-5	3.47	69

Table 7 shows that all participants had a good knowledge of performance which could be expected from nurses' aides. Both the junior and senior classes had a mean of 88 per cent. The freshmen students had a mean of 77 per cent.

TABLE 7  
SCORES ON TEST ITEMS RELATING TO EXPECTED LEVEL  
OF PERFORMANCE FROM NURSES' AIDES

Class	Highest Possible Score	Range of Scores	Mean	Mean in Per Cent
Freshmen	19	9-18	14.64	77
Juniors	19	15-18	16.82	88
Seniors	19	13-19	16.64	88

The scores shown in Tables 4 and 7 were higher than in other areas of the questionnaire. This seems to indicate that the students are well acquainted with what they can expect the licensed practical nurse and nurses' aide to do. A comparison of Tables 2 and 5 show that the students as a whole were more familiar with the educational background of licensed practical nurses than they were with the educational background of nurses' aides. Tables 3 and 6 indicate that the students had comparable knowledge of the preparation of licensed practical nurses and nurses' aides.

Table 8 shows that students who had had the course in Fundamentals of Management and Teaching in Clinical Areas achieved a slightly higher score in relation to knowledge about nurses' aides than the students who had not

had this course. The differences were greatest in knowledge about educational background and preparation. In these areas the students who had had the course achieved the highest scores.

TABLE 8  
SCORES MADE BY TWO GROUPS OF SENIOR STUDENTS  
ON TEST ITEMS RELATING TO NURSES' AIDES

Nurses' Aides	GROUP I <sup>a</sup>		GROUP II <sup>b</sup>	
	Mean	Mean in Per Cent	Mean	Mean in Per Cent
Educational Background	1.35	45	1.12	37
Preparation	3.64	73	3.31	66
Level of Performance	17	89	16.82	88

<sup>a</sup>Students who had had course in Fundamentals of Management and Teaching in Clinical Areas.

<sup>b</sup>Students who did not have course

Table 9 shows that the students who did not have the course entitled Fundamentals of Management and Teaching in Clinical Areas achieved a higher mean in the areas relating to the educational background and preparation of



licensed practical nurses than the students who had had the course. The students who had had the course obtained a higher mean in the area relative to the level of performance,

TABLE 9  
SCORES MADE BY TWO GROUPS OF SENIOR STUDENTS  
ON TEST ITEMS RELATING TO LICENSED  
PRACTICAL NURSES

Licensed Practical Nurses	GROUP I <sup>a</sup>		GROUP II <sup>b</sup>	
	Mean	Mean in Per Cent	Mean	Mean in Per Cent
Educational Background	2.78	70	2.93	73
Preparation	6.35	64	7.37	74
Level of Performance	14.85	87	14.31	84

<sup>a</sup>Students who had had course in Fundamentals of Management and Teaching Clinical Areas.

<sup>b</sup>Students who did not have course.

Tables 8 and 9 seem to indicate that the students have not profited from the course in Management and Teaching in Clinical Areas in relation to their knowledge of the roles of auxiliary personnel.

As has been pointed out earlier, the students received their highest scores in the areas on level of performance which could be expected from nurses' aides and licensed practical nurses. However, the students showed lack of understanding in answering two questions which seemed significant. Table 10 shows that a question pertaining to the level of performance expected from licensed practical nurses was scored correctly by less than 50 per cent of the juniors and seniors. Sixty-nine per cent of the freshmen answered correctly. In the item pertaining to the level of performance expected from nurses' aides, a slightly higher per cent of the juniors and seniors responded correctly while only 33 per cent of the freshmen gave the appropriate answer.

TABLE 10

RESPONSES TO SIGNIFICANT TRUE-FALSE ITEMS RELATING TO LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE  
OF LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES AND NURSES' AIDES

Items	FRESHMEN		JUNIORS		SENIORS	
	Number of Students	Number of Correct Answers	Number of Students	Number of Correct Answers	Number of Students	Number of Correct Answers
Practical nurses are well-equipped to care for acutely ill patients . . . .	45	31	28	13	30	13
Nurses' aides who have completed their training can perform with little or no supervision . .	45	15	28	16	30	20

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Table 11 compares the responses of seniors who had had the course in Fundamentals of Management and Teaching in Clinical Areas with those seniors who had not had the course in relation to the same questions. The seniors who had completed the course had a higher average of correct answers than those who had not had the course.

TABLE 11  
 SCORES MADE BY TWO GROUPS OF SENIOR STUDENTS  
 ON SIGNIFICANT TRUE-FALSE ITEMS

Items	GROUP I <sup>a</sup>		GROUP II <sup>b</sup>	
	Number of Students	Number of Correct Answers	Number of Students	Number of Correct Answers
Practical nurses are well-equipped to care for acutely ill patients . . . .	14	9	16	4
Nurses' aides who have completed their training can perform with little or no supervision . .	14	11	16	9

<sup>a</sup>Students who had had course in Fundamentals of Management and Teaching in Clinical Areas.

<sup>b</sup>Students who did not have course.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

This study was undertaken to ascertain what knowledge the professional student nurses in a specific hospital had in relation to the educational background of auxiliary nursing personnel, the preparation given to these persons and the level of performance which could be expected from them. It was done to test the hypothesis that students have very limited knowledge of the role of auxiliary personnel with whom they will work as graduate nurses in planning for and giving patient care.

A questionnaire, which was developed for this study, was administered to 103 students in a three year diploma school of nursing. The participants represented all but two students from the school. Forty-five were freshmen students, twenty-eight were junior students and thirty were senior students.

The measuring tool was divided into two sections. Section one pertained to licensed practical nurses and section two to nurses' aides. Each section had true-false

questions, best answer questions, a check list and one free response item. The items posed specific questions in relation to the educational background, preparation and level of performance which could be expected from nurses' aides and licensed practical nurses.

The highest score on the questionnaire, which contained a total of fifty-eight items, was fifty-four. This score was obtained by a senior student as were the next four highest scores. The sixteen lowest scores were obtained by freshmen students. The mean score was 37.53 for freshmen, 44.25 for juniors and 46.19 for seniors. The highest score in per cent achieved by a student was 93 and the lowest score was at 50 per cent.

The participants made higher scores in relation to their knowledge of the educational background of licensed practical nurses than they did on their knowledge of the educational background of nurses' aides. However, the average scores in both these areas were low.

As a whole the students knew slightly more about the preparation of licensed practical nurses and nurses' aides than they did about the educational background of the two groups. The seniors obtained the highest scores in questions relating to both groups of personnel.

All classes attained their highest average scores in relation to the performance which could be expected from

both groups of workers. The students made very few errors in checking procedures which licensed practical nurses and nurses' aides could do. Most of the errors relating to level of performance were on those questions which covered the scope of responsibility of these auxiliary persons.

Students who had had the course in Fundamentals of Management and Teaching in Clinical Areas, achieved a higher mean in four areas and students who had not had the course responded more accurately to questions relative to performance which was not procedure-centered. They seemed to have a more comprehensive understanding of what the licensed practical nurse and nurses' aide is prepared to do and how much the professional nurse can expect from them. The average of scores for both groups, however, was very close and seemed to indicate that the course was limited in helping them to learn more about the roles of auxiliary personnel.

### Conclusions

The data revealed that the hypothesis that students have very limited knowledge of the role of auxiliary personnel with whom they will work as graduate nurses in planning for patient care, was supported although not to a great degree.

Freshmen students knew least about the information requested and senior students knew the most. This would be expected as the students had more direct contacts with auxiliary personnel as they progressed through the program. The data also indicated that the students were not well informed about the educational background and preparation of the two groups of auxiliary personnel. Most students seemed to have accurate knowledge about the procedures that these people had been taught but they were uncertain about the categories of patients that could be assigned to practical nurses and the degree of supervision needed by nurses' aides. The answers to questions of this type seemed to reflect current practices in the ward units rather than an understanding of the limitations in the preparation of the individual.

The data also revealed that senior students who had been given a course in Fundamentals of Management and Teaching in Clinical Areas did not respond significantly better than those senior students who had not had the course except to questions which indicated a more comprehensive understanding about the level of performance which could be expected from auxiliary personnel.



Recommendations

As a result of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. That studies be conducted in other schools to determine what preparation the student needs to assume her responsibilities as a leader of the nursing team.
2. That any person who wishes to conduct a similar study use a measuring tool with open ended questions to eliminate some of the opportunity for guessing.
3. That faculties in schools of nursing evaluate their curriculums in relation to the course content and experiences they are providing which will prepare the student to function, upon graduation, as a leader of a nursing team.

**B I B L I O G R A P H Y**

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**A P P E N D I X**

Date:

Class:

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section I

Licensed Practical Nurses

The answers to the following questions related to practical nurses are based on the program in practical nursing at the David Hale Fanning Trade High School for Girls in Worcester, Mass.

A. Educational Background

Please place a check in the box opposite the correct answer.

1. Students will be considered for admission to the program in practical nursing if they are in the following age groupings:

17-30 years of age	<input type="checkbox"/>
17-40 years of age	<input type="checkbox"/>
17-50 years of age	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Applicants between the ages of 17-21 years of age must have completed the following years of schooling:

grammar school	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 years of high school	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 years of high school	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Applicants between the ages of 21-25 years of age must have completed the following years of schooling:

grammar school	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 years of high school	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 years of high school	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Applicants are given aptitude tests as part of the admission procedure:

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. Preparation

1. The length of the course is:

9 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 months	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. The length of the clinical experience at this hospital is:

8 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. The students are given a monthly stipend or allowance:

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. The students have experiences in the following clinical areas. Please indicate the length of experience which students have in each area:

Medical and Surgical Nursing

4 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>

Obstetric Nursing

4 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>

Pediatric Nursing

4 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>

Diet Therapy

2 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Courses related to experiences are given while the students are assigned to the service.

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. The name of the person responsible for the instruction and supervision of the practical nurse students at this hospital is:

Miss \_\_\_\_\_

7. Student practical nurses live:

At home	<input type="checkbox"/>
At Girls' Trade High School	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the nurses' residence	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Level of Performance

Please indicate by a check those skills which practical nurses are taught and can be expected to perform with accuracy:

1. Colostomy irrigation	<input type="checkbox"/>
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2. Post mortem care
3. Catheterization
4. Perineal care
5. Preparation of infant formulas
6. Infant bath
7. Sterile dressings
8. Blood pressure readings
9. Testing urine for sugar
10. Admission, discharge and transfer of patients

Please encircle the T if you believe the statement to be true and encircle the F if you believe the statement to be false:

1. Practical nurses are assisted in developing the ability to work cooperatively with co-workers. T F
2. Practical nurses are well-equipped to care for acutely ill patients. T F
3. Practical nurses have a clear understanding of the degree of responsibility which they may assume. T F
4. Practical nurses are prepared to teach selected procedures to patients and families. T F
5. Practical nurses have some understanding of the patients' emotional needs. T F
6. Practical nurses have an awareness of the physiological and psychological changes in the older age group. T F
7. Practical nurses are accepted by professional nurses as valued members of the nursing team. T F

## Section II

### Nurses' Aides

Questions related to nurses' aides are based on the preparation and responsibilities as delegated to these persons at this hospital.

#### A. Educational Background



Please place a check in the box opposite the correct answer.

- 1. The average age of aides who are accepted for training is:

18-25 years of age

25-35 years of age

35-50 years of age

- 2. The average aide has completed the following years of schooling:

grammar school

2 years of high school

4 years of high school

- 3. Nurses' Aides accepted for training in this hospital of ten have had previous nursing experience:

Yes

No

B. Preparation

- 1. The length of the training course given by the hospital for those interested in being nurses' aides is:

5 weeks

12 weeks

15 weeks

- 2. During the training course aides are given a stipulated weekly rate of pay:

Yes

No

- 3. During the initial training courses all aides are also prepared to assist on the Obstetrical and Pediatric units:

Yes

No

- 4. The name of the person responsible for the instruction and supervision of the nurses' aides is:

Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_

- 5. The training course includes formal instruction in the classroom as well as supervised practice in the ward units

Yes

No

C. Level of Performance

Please indicate by a check those skills which nurses' aides are taught and can be expected to perform with accuracy:



- 1. Bed Making
  - a. Empty
  - b. Occupied
  - c. Anesthesia
- 2. Taking and recording of temperature, pulse and respirations
- 3. Catheterization
- 4. Taking and recording blood pressure readings
- 5. Cleansing enemas
- 6. Application of ace bandages
- 7. Colostomy irrigations
- 8. Sterile Wet Dressings
- 9. Use of clinical charts and bedside notes
- 10. Admission and discharge of patients
- 11. Pre-operative care
- 12. Bladder irrigations
- 13. Preczation technique
- 14. Care of pressure sores

Please encircle the T if you believe the statement to be true and encircle the F if you believe the statement to be false:

- 1. Nurses' Aides who have completed their training can perform with little or no supervision. T F
- 2. Nurses' Aides have the ability to teach other nurses' aides those skills which they have learned. T F
- 3. All Nurses' Aides are able to identify the patient who needs competent emotional support which they are not capable of giving. T F
- 4. Nurses' Aides can be expected to perform skillfully those procedures in which they have had instruction and supervision. T F
- 5. Nurses' Aides can be expected to understand their relationship to other members of the nursing team. T F