

CENTENARY CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

Geneva. 28 August - 10 September 1963

COUNCIL OF DELEGATES

DS/5/2

HEALTH AND SOCIAL COMMISSION

Item 5 of the Agenda

Red Cross responsibilities today in the field of Nursing

- Report of the Red Cross International Nursing Study Centre -

Ninety nurses from 29 countries and 4 international organisations met in Lausanne, August 19 - 23, 1963 to discuss the role of the Red Cross nurse in today's world and to plan for the future.

To paraphrase Florence Nightingale's words of something less than 100 years ago it has been said "into the future open a better way". In the same era Henri Dunant gave the world one of the greatest gifts to humanity - the Red Cross - a better way into the future, 1863 to 1963. The participants at the Nursing Study Centre sought to build on this foundation a better way for nurses and Red Cross for the next 100 years, 1963 to 2063.

Throughout the sessions new techniques of learning and creative thinking were utilized. The methods successfully demonstrated how nurses could improve their activities on their return home. On the first day the participants were asked to put in writing the questions they hoped to have answered at the Study Centre. It was satisfying to note that an analysis of the questions indicated that the programme planned would in a large measure satisfy the expectations of the group.

Red Cross Principles and the Geneva Conventions

For two days, lectures and discussions centred around the basic foundations of Red Cross and their application to nursing activities. As the week progressed the word "principles" guided the thinking of the group. A study of the Geneva Conventions forced the participants to lay bare their consciences. Those who had not directly suffered under conditions the Conventions seek to prevent, were sorry that the agonies of the past had to be revived for many. However, by sharing experiences it was possible for all to understand and deeply appreciate the ethical

and legal position of the nurse demanded by the Geneva Conventions in times of conflict. The simple principle "Whoever needs care must be cared for without delay" will be remembered.

The participants sought the best ways to disseminate the Geneva Conventions within National Societies through schools of nursing, national nurses' associations and the medical services of the armed forces.

Application of Red Cross Principles to Red Cross Nursing Activities

- Nurses in National Defence -

A paper was given which gave a review of plans for emergency nursing - how to work closely with nursing organisations to promote safe nursing care for the people in any kind of emergency situation, in natural disasters as well as national defence. The preparation of people through courses in Home Nursing and as volunteer nurses' aides was emphasized as a means to supplement the services of the professional nurse. The need to develop close working relationships between Red Cross and nursing organisations was pointed up. It was agreed that special training for the nurses in disaster nursing was essential.

- Home Nursing -

The Study Centre received a report on the 4th International Meeting of Red Cross Home Nursing Instructors held in Geneva, 15 - 16 August, 1963. It was agreed that the dedication of these nurses merits the support of the governing bodies and the directors of nursing services in all the national societies. There were 50 participants from 26 countries in attendance.

- Red Cross Nursing Personnel -

Recruitment and Enrolment

The need to actively recruit nurses was emphasized as follows:

- (a) In peacetime, both full-time and as volunteers.
- (b) For a reserve to serve in disasters and in times of conflict.

Contact should be made and maintained with heads of nursing services such as the official public health services, directors of hospital nursing services and schools of nursing, principals of educational institutions.

To retain volunteers it was felt essential to train them for the work they were to do, to never delay in accepting an offer of service and to acknowledge merit periodically.

Preparation and Education

The following questions were discussed:

- How much training?
- What standard should be maintained?
- How to keep up to date?

These were not easily answered as the needs and resources varied greatly from country to country. There was agreement that instructors needed preparation in teaching and refresher courses are necessary for all categories.

Twenty-six countries operate schools of nursing. It was also pointed out that there were many ways to assist nursing education without operating schools such as pilot projects in cooperation with universities and the professional organisation and by providing bursaries and scholarships to prepare nurses for leadership positions in the country and in Red Cross.

Assignment and Service

The following points were outlined:

1. That a nurse should be in charge of the assignment of nurses and auxiliary nursing personnel.
2. That there should be good coordination between nursing services and other Red Cross activities as well as with community groups
3. That a current roster of nurses available for disaster should be maintained
4. That recognition is necessary in order to maintain the interest of nurses, both staff and volunteer.

The need for the International Red Cross to be specific as to qualifications when requesting nurses for international disaster assignments was emphasized.

Health Education

A report of the World Conference of Educators was received with interest and the role of the nurse in health education studied. It was agreed that methods of health education should be integrated into the preparation of nurses.

Administration of Nursing Services

It was reported that as of July 1963, 78 of the 88 members of the League of Red Cross Societies had some type of nursing activity. It was stated that nursing programmes must be under the direction of a nurse and an Advisory Committee of Key Nurses in the country is advisable. It was recognised that some new societies are not ready to employ a full-time nurse director but that a nurse advisor could be recruited from the organized profession or the ministry of health.

It was considered necessary that the nurse director have access to the authority that makes final decisions as to policies, programmes, development and finance in order to interpret the needs of nurses and the nursing programmes. The budget should be proposed by the nurse director substantiated by facts. Once the budget is approved the nursing personnel should have authority to spend the amount allocated to the best advantage of the service.

The need for constant evaluation of Red Cross Nursing projects was considered essential on the following bases:

1. Is the project in harmony with Red Cross Principles and the Geneva Conventions?
2. Is the purpose of the project being met?
3. Is the project meeting a real and current need in the country?
4. Is the project the best investment of Red Cross money?
5. Will the project be a short or long term responsibility of the Red Cross?

Relationship of the Red Cross with National and International Organisations interested in Nursing

The President of the International Council of Nurses attended the Study Centre as personal evidence of the links binding the nursing profession and the Red Cross. She reported that the Director of the Nursing Bureau as well as the Chief Nurse of the World Health Organization will henceforth be invited to attend the Board of Directors' meetings of the ICN, a relationship which will be extremely helpful to Red Cross nurses.

The Chief Nurse of WHO offered cooperation as well, in order that together much more can be accomplished. Financial assistance for projects must be sought through national governments but informal support between regional WHO consultants and Red Cross Directors will be welcomed. An example was given of how close relations can be effected at the national level between National Nurses' Associations and the National Red Cross Society.

Conclusion

The Study Centre concluded with the unanimous request that more such conferences be held in the future and when possible on a regional basis in order that more Red Cross Nurses might participate in this most satisfying experience.

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Red Cross responsibilities today in the Field of Nursing

Draft Recommendations

Presented by the Swiss Red Cross

The Council of Delegates,

Having taken note of the reports presented by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies on Red Cross responsibilities in the field of nursing,

shares in the concern expressed by the authors of these reports regarding the serious lack of qualified nurses and auxiliary nursing personnel in almost every country of the world,

emphasises the fact that National Red Cross Societies have a responsibility in contributing to the full measure of their possibilities, directly or indirectly, to the recruitment and preparation of such personnel in order that optimum assistance in the field of health be ensured to the people of their countries, namely in cases of disaster or conflict,

expresses the wish that National Societies assume fully such responsibility, in close cooperation with the Public Authorities and the Medical Services of the Armed Forces, as well as with the various national organisations of the medical and health professions,

invites to this end National Red Cross Societies to put in practice as widely as possible and without delay the measures recommended in the above named reports.

COMMISSION DE LA SANTE ET DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Point 5 de l'Ordre du jour

La responsabilité de la Croix-Rouge
aujourd'hui
dans le domaine des soins infirmiers

Projet de résolution présenté par la Croix-Rouge suisse

Le Conseil des Délégués,

ayant pris connaissance des rapports présentés par le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge et la Ligue des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge sur la responsabilité de la Croix-Rouge dans le domaine des soins infirmiers,

partage l'inquiétude exprimée par les auteurs de ces rapports quant à la grave insuffisance de personnel infirmier et aide-infirmier qualifié, dans presque tous les pays du monde,

souligne que les Sociétés nationales de la Croix-Rouge ont la responsabilité de contribuer, dans toute la mesure de leurs moyens, directement ou indirectement, au recrutement et à la formation d'un tel personnel, afin que soit assurée au mieux l'assistance sanitaire aux populations de leur pays, notamment en cas de catastrophe naturelle ou de conflit,

souhaite voir les Sociétés nationales assumer pleinement cette responsabilité, en collaboration étroite avec les Pouvoirs publics et les Services de santé des Forces armées, ainsi qu'avec les organismes nationaux groupant les membres des différentes professions médicales,

à cette fin, invite les Sociétés nationales à mettre en oeuvre, dans la mesure la plus large possible et sans tarder, les mesures préconisées dans les rapports sus-mentionnés.