

S. E. 104 A

## HOME NURSING

A report prepared by the American Red Cross for the  
XVIIth International Red Cross Conference,  
Stockholm, Sweden, August 20-30, 1948



## Introduction

In a world striving to maintain peace and promote cooperation, there is one objective upon which all can agree--the need to safeguard the health of the peoples of our respective countries. Our very greeting, "How are you?", spoken in any language, concerns itself with the important question, "How is your health?" It is therefore not surprising that Red Cross societies in general sponsor a variety of programs designed to promote the health of families, and to relieve and prevent suffering. In the American Red Cross one important part of its program is instruction of the public in simple nursing procedures required in home care of the sick, of infants, and of the aged. This instruction does not prepare individuals to give professional nursing care when this is needed by a patient, nor does it prepare people to nurse others for pay.

## Historical Background

As early as 1908, Mabel T. Boardman, a member of the Central Committee of the American Red Cross and a full time volunteer, recognizing the great need for home care of the sick, persuaded professional nurses in Washington to give lectures and demonstrations to groups of citizens. This was done after seeking the advice and support of professional nursing leaders and organizations. A few years later, in 1913, Jane A.

Delano, the first national director of the American Red Cross Nursing Service, wrote the first textbook on home nursing. The American Red Cross has sponsored this instructional program without interruption since that time, and in the course of the years nearly three million people have received home nursing certificates.

The home nursing program was accepted as a Red Cross activity through broad interpretation of the responsibilities placed upon it by its congressional charter, which calls upon the Red Cross not only to lessen the sufferings caused by pestilence, but also to devise and carry on measures for preventing such sufferings. The Red Cross realized that by helping homemakers to recognize the symptoms of illness and to give the simple nursing care the physician orders, such suffering could be prevented or relieved.

Throughout the years, interest of the public in this type of instruction has been maintained, and during times of national emergency greatly accentuated. During the first world war, for example, much concern was aroused by the rejection of a considerable number of applicants for military service because of physical and mental disability. Health officials and citizens alike were disturbed by this evidence of national

failure to provide adequate care for the health of our children and to bring them to adult life in good physical and mental health. The influenza epidemic of 1918 also brought into dramatic focus the inability of the American people to perform safely and efficiently the simple skills needed to care for the sick at home.

Gradually the American Red Cross extended on a nation-wide basis its program of home nursing instruction as a part of a number of nursing activities that had begun as a program of nurse enrollment for war and disaster. The demand for training in home care of the sick is understandably great during times of national emergency, such as war or epidemics. At such times every person is forcefully reminded that sickness and injury may affect him and his family, and he feels the need for self-protection that can be gained from knowing what to do when such disaster does strike.

Professional workers know, however, that the need is present at all times because illness is our greatest disaster, and a continuing one. In spite of an increased number of available hospital beds, most sick people are cared for at home, usually by the homemaker. This problem of home care is becoming greater because of age changes in the population. Like many other countries,

the United States finds that in spite of the somewhat higher birth rate during the past few years, the proportion of aged persons is increasing. Many of this age group will need nursing care at home.

As methods of prevention and care of acute and communicable diseases improve and diagnosis becomes more exact, the proportion of persons suffering from chronic illness also increases. While chronic illness has hitherto been considered a problem primarily of the aging, recent studies point out that fully one-half of such cases concern persons below the age of 45. In many instances those who suffer from a chronic disease can best be cared for at home. The trend towards shortening the patient's stay in the hospital and the currently high birth rate have also increased the amount of nursing care required in the home.

#### Aims of Home Nursing In- struction

American Red Cross objectives in offering home nursing instruction are to afford people the opportunity to learn:

1. To recognize some of the common symptoms of illness and to report these accurately to the doctor.
2. To keep a patient comfortable and to carry out simple treatments that may be ordered by the doctor.
3. To understand what care is needed

by women in the prenatal and post-natal period and for the baby and the young child.

4. To know about medical and health resources available for the prevention and care of illness.
5. To understand and appreciate personal responsibility in preventing spread of disease in the family and community.

Among teaching materials prepared by the American Red Cross is a textbook kept up to date through periodic revisions. Home Nursing class members may purchase this textbook at a small charge to cover printing costs. Additional subject material is prepared when needed to meet specific situations or emergencies. Teaching guides, lesson outlines, and other aids of special assistance to instructors are also prepared and made available.

To assure accuracy all teaching material is carefully reviewed by experts in the various fields concerned. Through conferences with national, state and local health authorities, an effort is made also to have the material adapted to specific health needs.

At present, home nursing is taught by professional nurses authorized as instructors by the American Red Cross. In many communities Red

Cross home nursing instruction is given either as a regular part of the school curriculum or is offered as a student activity out of school hours. Local health agencies may also offer the entire course or some part of it as a regular part of their program. The more usual plan, however, is for the American Red Cross itself, through its enrolled volunteer or paid nurses, to give Red Cross home nursing courses under one of the five instructional plans set up to meet the needs of community groups. These are:

Plans of  
Instruction

1. Six-lesson course in Care of the Sick: six 2-hour sessions of demonstration, practice and discussion. In this course about 33 specific nursing procedures thought to be most frequently used in caring for the sick at home have been selected for study and one simple method of carrying out each of these nursing procedures is used for demonstration and practice. The teaching of this course requires special training of the instructor.
2. Six-lesson course in Mother and Baby Care and Family Health: six 2-hour sessions. This includes information especially concerning prenatal and postnatal care, the development of babies and young children, nursing and general hygienic care of children, and conditions relating to family health. The teaching of this

course also requires special training of the instructor.

3. Secondary School Course (30 hours): for children beyond elementary school age. This course may be given in school or to out-of-school groups.
4. College Course (48 hours): planned especially for students preparing for community work as teachers and youth leaders.
5. Standard Course (24 hours) usually in 2-hour sessions. This includes essentially the same content as the six-lesson courses in Care of the Sick and Mother and Baby Care and Family Health. It is usually offered where there are no specially trained instructors or when it is necessary to change the course content to meet unusual needs of local groups.

These home nursing courses may be taken by boys and men as well as girls and women. In the case of the secondary school and college courses, educational authorities may request local Red Cross chapters to assist by helping to supply instructors or equipment.

#### Teacher Training

To help instructors to do more specific group teaching, an instructor training program has been planned. This was developed during the last war to assist nurse instructors to



reach a great number of people with home nursing in the shortest possible time. Lesson outlines for Care of the Sick, Mother and Baby Care and Family Health, and the Secondary School Course have been prepared. They have been developed with great care to make them readily understandable to laymen, to include the information most frequently needed for home care of the sick, and to assure their technical accuracy. These outlines serve as a guide to the instructor for course content, arrangement and timing, and the use of visual aids.

The outlines require careful interpretation to and actual practice by the instructor if they are to be used with intelligence and ease. To provide this help, carefully planned instructor training courses are offered to interested nurses.

The instructor training course consists of two parts:

1. The period of intensive instruction, in which a qualified nurse instructor who is also a training supervisor demonstrates and interprets the content and method of the course to be taught, and the nurse instructors-in-training give return demonstrations of the same material, each of them teaching assigned parts of the lesson. This is followed

by an explanation of the educational principles involved and an evaluation of the students' ability to use them.

2. The period of supervised practice teaching, during which each instructor-in-training teaches under supervision a six-lesson course in home nursing.

Instructor training courses are usually given to groups of 10 nurses, but may be given to an individual when necessary. The courses for both instructors and lay persons have been developed in accordance with certain basic principles of teaching and learning, with special consideration to the following:

1. One learns by doing. In other words, practicing correctly results in learning correctly.
2. A good example of performing a procedure is presented by the instructor and explained before practice by the learner.
3. Practice by the learner must be correct from the very beginning.
4. Guided practice follows promptly after demonstration.
5. Additional assistance is given as needed.
6. Adequate space and equipment are

required for effective teaching and learning.

7. Recognizing individual differences and providing for satisfaction in learning are essentials of good teaching.

An explanation of what is being done, how it is being done, and why it is being done just that way accompanies the doing of any procedure or part of a procedure as (1) demonstrated by the instructor, and (2) practiced by the learner.

Each procedure to be learned is divided into easily learned units, and these units are in turn divided into the important steps that make the learning easier. To learn correctly, each learner practices these important steps and is directed and corrected by the instructor as she does them. The training is designed to provide nurse instructors (1) with a good background for group teaching and for using visual aids, (2) with the ability to recognize individual differences among students, (3) with the ability to adapt the material to the needs of any group, and (4) with increased self-confidence in teaching.

#### Chapter Responsibilities

Responsibility for providing home nursing instruction rests with the local Red Cross chapter. Together with local authorities in the fields of health and education, the

chapter determines the needs of the community for this kind of instruction and the best way to provide it. A chapter committee arranges for classrooms and supplies the equipment needed for demonstration by the instructor and practice by the students. The committee finds instructors who are willing to teach classes and arranges for their training. The instructors are supplied with outlines, posters, and other teaching aids. Through special publicity the local community is acquainted with the opportunities for instruction.

#### National Responsibilities

The staff at national headquarters, working closely with other national health and educational authorities, determines the policies governing the program. The national staff also prepares teaching outlines, as well as leaflets and posters to be used in guiding or promoting chapter programs, and gives direct help to chapters through visits and correspondence. The latter may take the form of interpreting home nursing to the chapter and assisting it in forming a committee of interested local citizens to promote and direct the program. Help is given also in recruiting local nurses as instructors and in providing necessary supervision to insure a program that reflects credit upon the organization.

#### Problems

While the general reaction to the home nursing program has been

excellent, there are still problems difficult to solve. The most obvious is that of reaching a sufficient number of the population. Even though it has been possible to recruit large numbers of volunteer instructors, training and supervision necessitate the use of regularly employed staff. Then, too, it is difficult to reach isolated areas with such instruction, since training and supervision are much more easily effected in cities. We are now trying several approaches in an effort to serve better our rural population.

In this paper we have tried to present the essentials of the plan of instruction established to meet the needs in this country. It is obvious that it is only one of many satisfactory plans that have been functioning in Red Cross societies over the world for many years. Nurse visitors from abroad who have visited the American Red Cross during the past 2 years have given our staff many interesting and stimulating ideas as they describe home nursing courses in their countries.

In 1945, at the request of the League, the American Red Cross home nursing textbook was translated into Spanish and was made available by the League to all Spanish-speaking people who desired to use it.

Providing for simple care of the sick by the homemaker is recognized as a universal need throughout the

world, and Red Cross societies are interested in helping to meet this need. Through the Nursing Bureau of the League, we, as nurses, have a great opportunity to share with each other our experiences and ideas and to develop in our own countries plans for carrying out this program of home nursing education, thus adding immeasurably to the health and happiness of mankind.

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