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Nursing Study at Yale

Yale School of Nursing

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NURSING STUDY AT YALE
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From the Dean—

Young nurses of today are in an enviable position. The science of nursing is yet to be formulated, and they are the ones who will do it.

For a long time nurses have recognized the need for systematic study, and have gone through a process of groping. More and more of us in the past decade have been raising the questions: What is effective nursing? And how can it be studied?

Perhaps you might say that we, the faculty, are in an enviable position also, because we are the ones who can provide the tools of study and research for these future leaders of the profession. We do feel a sense of responsibility and a sense of excitement, and we are grateful to be the catalysts which may help form the new world of nursing.

Two years ago the Yale School
of Nursing became exclusively a graduate school. We worked long hours to design our curriculum, a curriculum which we hoped would provide the graduate students with the opportunity to explore and understand the elements of nursing so that they would be prepared to develop new concepts about the effect of nursing on the health of the individual.

In order to do this, we believe the graduate student in nursing needs the following four tools which our program aims to provide: A study of nursing which includes the practice of nursing, and analysis of the nursing practice. The intense focus of this study must, of necessity, be in one field of clinical specialty or another, and students, therefore, elect maternal and newborn health nursing, or public health nursing or mental health and psychiatric nursing.

As a second tool, she needs skill in identifying a problem of the
effect of nursing care and systematically studying it. Thirdly, she must be aware of and conversant with other related disciplines—sociology, anthropology, epidemiology, and medicine, including psychiatry. Finally, because she will in all probability be teaching nursing or administering a patient care unit, she will need supervised practice in one of these.

The study is intense and the program is demanding. This year we have had our first opportunity to see the fruits of our labor—the first graduates of the revised curriculum—and we feel gratified. It is surprising that the students make such great strides in so short a time. This may be because the classes are small, and the students can and do become deeply involved. It is obvious that the students have their rewards. They feel effective as nurses and they know why they are effective.

Florence Schorske Wald
Sarah Johnson had had two years of nursing practice and teaching nursing before she decided to come to graduate school. Although nursing care she gave was usually effective, she recognized that her skill was intuitive. Therefore, she felt that in order to teach nursing successfully, she must know why she was usually effective, and why she was sometimes ineffective.

During her first term in graduate school, several hours of field experience a week gave her new insight. She discovered that patients had difficulty in expressing
themselves for one reason or another and that the essential part of the nurse’s role is to make it possible for the patient to express himself clearly and correctly. She found that this is what made the difference in effective care of patients.

Although the idea was simple and clear, it took considerable time for her to become skillful and consistent in its use. After each of her field work experiences she learned to reconstruct an account of what had happened between herself and the patient and anyone else who took part in the nursing care during the time she was with him.

Her tutor was in the field with the students during the first period and she helped Sarah to recall the details which she’d forgotten. Before her next class, she wrote a reconstruction of the incident and then with the help of her classmates and tutor her idea began to take shape, and her ability to carry it out in practice was realized.
Meanwhile, in her course in Methods of Research, she was beginning to learn how to study an idea or concept systematically in order to test its validity. She was learning research techniques by helping a second-year student, Barbara Matthews, to collect data for a study of the types of eating problems children have in the hospital, and the effect the nurse can have on resolving these problems.
While Mrs. Matthews was being nurse and observer, Mrs. Johnson was observer only, and after each study period they compared observations to be certain that their data was valid.

In the children's unit, Mrs. Johnson was impressed with the different way in which children communicate and the ingenuity which nurses must develop to understand this "private" language.

She had also been caring for elderly patients and patients who were called disoriented, and she began to feel that all patients had certain needs which they were not able to express without help from the nurse. Certainly she had observed this in the children, in older people, and also in the people who were "disoriented."

In the late fall of the first year, one of the papers discussed in the Research Seminar by all the faculty and students was a study of the way nurses behave toward with-
drawn patients, and the way effective nurses should respond to improve patients so seriously ill that they are called psychotic. Gwen Tudor Will, the author, came from Washington, D.C. to discuss this paper.

Mrs. Johnson was now quite sure that an area which needed study was the communication between disoriented patients and nurses, focused on how the nurse’s action affects this type of patient’s behavior.

Mrs. Johnson went to one of the faculty members to discuss the plans for her study. The faculty member is developing an index to nursing research and already had available as complete a file of nursing studies as can be found. After consulting her, Mrs. Johnson looked through appropriate sections of the file to see whether studies related to her problem had been published, found and entered in the file.

For weeks the plan of study began to grow in Mrs. Johnson’s
mind. In one of the seminars conducted by a psychiatrist, she began to see the needs of patients in a new perspective—as viewed by a psychiatrist.

Another invaluable experience was discussion with her contemporaries. They talked on their way to and from classes, in the evenings, over lunch, etc. One of her classmates, Marion Wilder, spent long hours testing and developing her ideas with Sarah. Miss Wilder began to work on
the many different kinds of needs which patients have. At one point they thought of conducting the study together but later they decided on two related studies.

In larger classes, in the social studies and in public health, they both had a chance to talk about their findings and ideas with colleagues from other disciplines—medicine, sociology, anthropology, health education, etc. Although at first they were somewhat hesitant to express themselves, they soon began to feel
the respect with which the students from other professions regarded their formulations, and they in turn became more daring and outspoken.

By the end of the first year, Mrs. Johnson had finished a pilot study and was convinced that she wanted to do her Master’s Report next year about the same problem. After her summer vacation, she was faced with a difficult decision of whether to devote her second year to field experience in research or in teaching.
She decided on teaching, knowing that she might be able to return for a third post-master’s year which would combine research and teaching.

Sarah spent the summer between her first and second year of graduate study working part time in the hospital, which enabled her to put some of her new findings to test. She also found time to marry a graduate student in Political Science and they were both preparing for another year of concentrated work.

The second year is as busy and as demanding as the first. Both
Sarah and Marion are teaching undergraduate nurses in training, under the careful supervision of our faculty. They also take a seminar in Education.

Sarah has nearly completed collecting her data. Marion is slightly further along and is writing her study.

One of their classmates is presenting a paper this year at the American Orthopsychiatric meetings in New York City under the sponsorship of a doctor with whom she did some research during the summer months. Both plan to stay another year for post-master’s research. Their classmates are beginning to think about the coming year, and a large majority of them are going into teaching. Several have prepared themselves for administration, and each year an increasing number are going into research.

The need for persons like Mrs. Johnson, well prepared in a clinical area of specialty, able to teach
and to carry out studies in nursing, is urgent. We know that the number of college students is increasing, yet the number of teachers is falling further and further behind. This is true of nursing, and true of all other professions, and is by now widely recognized. Just as pressing as the need for teachers is the need for administrators, and nurse researchers.