

## SPECIALIZED TRAINING OF NURSES IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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### ABSTRACT

The nurse holds a very significant place in a team for the protection of workers' health. In order to carry out various and complex tasks relating to the protection and improvement of workers' health, the nurse as a "teacher" of health should be specially trained.

The Institute for Professional Training and Specialization of Health Workers and the Institute of Occupational and Radiological Health in Belgrade instituted a two-semester occupational health course. The first such course was held in 1974/75. Until now three courses have been held with an average number of 15 students. The aim of the course is to train nurses who graduated from a general medical school for work on the protection of workers' health.

From the modest experience with occupational health courses in the republic of Serbia it is concluded that two-semester courses for professional training of nurses are essential. Professional training should be carried out according to the principle: education at work and from work i.e. the attendants should spend half of the teaching programme at their working posts under the supervision of a mentor. During the training the plan and programme are dynamically changed and adjusted to the needs of the group. The entire educational programme is so designed that the attendants are active and independent participants in the process.

The scientific and technological development as part of a historical process bears strong economic, social and cultural impacts. It also favours the expansion of all kinds of knowledge especially of the knowledge which relates to man and his health.

Modern society pays particular attention to the working man, to providing optimum conditions for work, reducing health hazards, improving worker's health and his health education. In the Yugoslav system of workers' management these objectives are achieved through permanent collaboration of health workers, psychologists, pedagogues and other professionals in the team with responsible persons from working organizations. In a team for the protection of workers' health the nurse plays a very prominent role. In order to carry out various and complex tasks relating to the protection and improvement of workers' health the nurse as a "teacher" of health should be specially trained. The rapid development of the medical science and the use of new work technologies demand that nurses

be permanently trained in occupational health i.e. that they be acquainted with the latest achievements in the field of occupational health, psychology of work, pedagogy, etc.

Organized professional training of nurses for work in occupational health services started in the form of a six-week course held in the City Public Health Centre in Belgrade in the school year 1959/1960. The development of occupational health service, advances in medicine, use of new technologies in industry demand modified curricula and teaching programmes. By following up changes in the organization and work of occupational health services as well as by analysing the experience with the training of nurses it became evident that the existing system of training has to be enlarged, made more flexible and more dynamic.

A new curriculum and teaching programme for the training of nurses in occupational health were established in 1969/1970. During the past ten years the question of professional training of occupational health nurses in Yugoslavia has received considerable attention. The Institute for Professional Training and Specialization of Health Workers and the Institute of Occupational and Radiological Health in Belgrade worked out a curriculum and a programme for a two-semester course in occupational health. The first such course took place in the year 1974/1975. So far three courses have been held with an average number of 15 students. The aim of the course is to provide professional training to nurses who have graduated from a general medical school to enable them for work on the protection of workers' health. With such courses one of the basic demands of the education reform i.e. education at work and from work has begun to realize in practice.

The course is organized so that the students spend the first two months in both semesters attending theoretical and practical lectures and another two months at their workplaces following the programme that they have studied. Their work is supervised by an expert in health education, functional measurements, work hygiene, nutrition or in a related field. The teaching programme envisages visits to occupational health clinics and various industries. In the second semester the students prepare themselves for the final written examination which they are supposed to pass at the end of the course. After completing the course they receive a diploma which entitles them to work on the protection of workers' health.

In order to further improve teaching programme and curricula the Institute for Professional Training and Specialization of Health Workers has been following up the work of graduate students. Professional meetings of nurses who attended specialized training courses and of the new students are held every year.

During the lectures as well as during the practical part of the course the teachers are in permanent contact with the students. Through questionnaires, talks and discussions it has become obvious that such training adequately meets the needs of occupational health service. During the course the teaching programme is constantly amended and adjusted to the needs of the group. The course attendants are of great help as they improve the teaching plan and

programme themselves. Various teaching methods are used: lectures with discussions, discussions, demonstrations, practical work, seminar papers and others. Visual aids are also used. Besides slides, films, and exhibitions the course attendants have opportunities to see, learn and work with various instruments and to get practically acquainted with the use of visual aids. Nurses' visits to industrial plants during the course (health education of workers by lectures, discussions, talks, etc.) are particularly useful and they mean a considerable innovation in the work relating to the protection of workers' health.

The nurses who have completed the course can help other nurses in occupational health service with their knowledge and experience. Occupational health courses for nurses are currently organized in the republics of Serbia and Slovenia.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The present modest experience in the republic of Serbia has shown that organized professional training of nurses for work in occupational health services of two-semester duration is essential.

The training should be carried out according to the principle: education at work and from work, i.e. half of the teaching programme relates to practical work at the working post under the supervision of a mentor.

During the course the teaching plan and programme are dynamically changed and adjusted to the needs of the group. The attendants take active part in the programme and this proves to be very useful.

The entire educational process is organized in such a manner that the attendants are active and independent participants in it.