

## NURSING IN A CHANGING WORLD

*An article by Mr. V. A. Christensen, was published under this title by the Regional Office for Europe of WHO in September last. We believe our readers will find the following excerpts to be of interest.*

The years that have elapsed since the end of the Second World War and the creation of the World Health Organization have been characterized by an enormous growth in medical and health services throughout the world. Countries that had formerly been thought of as amply endowed with physicians, nurses, and schools of medicine and nursing have consequently been faced with the problem of lack of trained personnel needed for expansion and for the vast changes in professional approaches.

The role of WHO in this climate of change has largely been to arrange meetings of interdisciplinary groups of persons who are knowledgeable about, and concerned with, the role of nursing, and of midwifery as well. A Symposium on Higher Education in Nursing, held at The Hague in October 1972, is but one example of this type of meeting. Here participants from 21 countries of the European Region of WHO stressed the need to view nursing and nurses in their relationship to the total system of health care. Nursing care in most countries is delivered by a variety of workers who provide services ranging from simple, repetitive manual skills to services involving a high level of judgement in applying scientific principles and in choosing the appropriate action to be taken.

### **Universities open their doors to nurses**

In several countries in the WHO European Region universities have opened their doors to nurses, and university programmes in nursing education have now been established in Belgium, France, Poland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and lately in Iceland. The rich resources of a university are of unique value in preparing the student nurse for the level and scope of nursing demanded in modern health care, and for a future career that requires flexibility and a capacity to adapt to change and to

the unknown. Educating nurses and doctors together can prepare them from their student days for their complementary roles in health care.

Degrees as Masters of Nursing or Bachelors of Nursing can now be taken at a few universities in Europe, amongst them Lublin and Manchester. The Manchester degree of Bachelor of Nursing was instituted in 1969, the unit responsible being the Department of Nursing within the Faculty of Medicine... In some States within the United States, nurses can study at medical schools, and can within certain fields diagnose and give treatment.

Entry to the nursing profession by a degree course is unfortunately still exceptional, but need not remain so. The Manchester course extends over four academic years of full-time study. It is designed to give almost equal weight to the theoretical studies of the sciences underlying nursing and to vocational training in the practice of nursing. It enables nursing students to enjoy an educational experience comparable with that of colleagues in medicine, social work and health administration.

The efforts to make hospital care more efficient and less gloomy are certainly praiseworthy. But one could take a more revolutionary step and ask whether the many new, huge and highly sophisticated hospitals are really necessary. One could also ask whether many of their patients could not quite adequately, often more efficiently and pleasantly, and certainly at a much smaller cost, be taken care of in comfortable nursing homes, or indeed in their own homes?

An almost alarming number of people who are not in need of intensive care are admitted to hospital simply for lack of suitable accommodation elsewhere, or of sufficient professional home-care services. Reserving hospital beds for people who really had to be there would call for a soul-searching re-evaluation of what constitutes a patient's real needs.

Nursing homes, ideally ones situated close to a hospital, could provide the day-to-day care and the relaxed atmosphere which most patients require. Where family circumstances permit, a well-organized, well-developed service of home nurses could provide care in surroundings which are the patient's own, and dear to him.

In the many discussions on the future of nursing, considerations such as these should, in my opinion, be given a prominent place.