

# A manager's task

The directors of nursing services have fresh duties. ANTHONY CARR gives details of their work which will include clinical, administrative, educative and personnel responsibilities.

**M**INISTERS have placed great importance on the setting up of "units of management" and directors of nursing service. In the reorganisation circular, unit posts, directors of nursing services (DNS), together with the district management team (DMT) are mentioned, but other proposals about ward sister and DNS are vague.

The position of director of nursing services is different to the present divisional nursing officer's job. Now there is a need to work in collaboration with an administrator and nominated senior doctor. Senior unit staff have corporate responsibilities, particularly monitoring budgets. Because a long time will be spent in these activities as well as other duties – until recently held at district or area level – the duties of the director and middle grades in management will alter.

## New posts

In discussion the responsibilities of the new directors' posts were reviewed under four headings:

- personal responsibilities as a senior nurse;
- responsibilities to the district in terms of initiating and reviewing nursing policy;
- nursing responsibilities at unit level;
- multidisciplinary responsibilities at unit level.

**Personal.** Each person must keep up-to-date and be aware of changes in the nursing profession in terms of general clinical development, nursing education and management practice. The individual is responsible for introducing changes in management practice and systems where appropriate, so that unit nursing managers practise with modern methods.

The director also must identify subordinate staff training needs and provide opportunities for their development.

**District responsibilities.** It is important that directors of nursing

service do not become so involved in the "unit" affairs that they neglect framing nursing policy at district level.

The director must participate and initiate proposals for district wide nursing policy or review established policy.

The chief nursing officer must be briefed on matters noticed by the DNS through details of meetings by DMT and health authority. All nursing directors must play a part in the corporate activities through arranged meetings.

Finally she contributes to proposals on planning and development.

**Nursing responsibility within the unit management structure.** The responsibilities outlined here are the main duties of a senior line manager in managing the nursing budget, appointing, disciplining and generally managing staff.

The nurse manager will provide an efficient, effective nursing service to patients or clients within the resources allocated. Any serious deficiencies which may arise, resulting in possible or actual reduction of service, will be reported to the the chief nursing officer.

She will manage the nursing staff and other unit staff. Within the limits set by the chief nursing officer, she will manage the nursing budget and delegate control to subordinate staff with clear lines of accountability. Grades and numbers are to be decided by DNS in consultation with the senior nurse holding staff post at district (personnel) level.

By arranging the clinical nursing services she will ensure that a senior nurse of appropriate rank can advise the DNS on all the unit's clinical aspects.

The unit nursing policy will be formed within the broad guidance of district wide policies and where these do not exist, she will propose such policy and maintain discipline in the unit in accordance to district policy.

She will employ and discipline staff from nursing auxiliary level to the present grade of nursing officer and issue a final warning to immediate subordinate staff. The manager has a say in selection of immediate subordinate staff and has a right of veto.

The arrangement of an effective selection system for new staff on the unit is one of her responsibilities, so is effectively monitoring clinical practice and nursing care standards.

All complaints and incidents relating to patients and nursing care will be investigated by her and reported to the chief nursing officer if the situation is not corrected despite management action having been taken.

The manager will follow certain agreed rules. Her role is to work with systems and staff so as to make available all resources and skills to those people in direct patient contact.

She must use expert nursing support staff at district level to enhance the management performance of all staff.

The nurse manager will assess the students' contribution and satisfy herself that learning aims and objectives are being achieved. She will arrange also for further education of the staff.

## Unit affairs

**Tripartite unit management.** The director of nursing has heavy responsibilities in working with a unit administrator and senior medical consultant. Collectively they will help plan or develop new services and the director will contribute to nursing matters together with reviewing budgets.

It is the director's job to manage the unit's affairs successfully and provide professional advice to members of the unit management team.

She must contribute to the nursing service's needs, both present and future, to allow a satisfactory service and be aware of the implications of overspending on individual budgets.

She will consider, with the team, the opportunities arising from underspending or from planned improvements in the use of resources and also contribute to the development planning terms of the unit in all its aspects □

## Bibliography

DHSS (1980) Structure and Management Health Circular HC(80)8.

**Next week: New posts at middle management level.**

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