A the trauma of re-
organisation contin-
uing to take its toll on
many nurse managers the
question arises: What of
the future for nurse man-
gerers?
Shrinking resources in
trealms and attempts at
introducing patient
tracers to run the support
services means that the
NHS we all know is no
longer able to undergo a trans-
formation. So what does the
future hold?
Nurse managers will
have to cope with a
increased demand for
more nurses. Nurses are
getting scarcer, so are the
offsetting less useful for
other nurses required and avail-
able as matched against
the money allocated and
the very heart of what
management is about. The
question is: What of the
future for nurses?
Nurse managers have
been told that the days of total
management is about. The
question is: What of the
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THE FUTURE OF NURSE MANAGEMENT

Continued from page 6

had most success in this area of their lives. It has been my experience that deteriorating performance in staff is nearly always connected with difficulties in the personal life rather than a direct consequence of the work situation. Help in these personal areas are likely to improve work performance far more effectively than anything else I know.

It is always a privilege to be let into someone’s personal life voluntarily and listen to the real problems people cope with. When this happens I always develop a new understanding and often find a new admiration for that person.

I do so hope that future nurse managers will provide a secure, emotional environment so that the staff can behave as real people in a real world.

You may say ‘I do not believe in this approach, my approach is strictly on a job-working relationship’. If this thinking troubles you then do not try and constitute something you cannot do. I would, however, suggest you yourself have personal difficulty if you cannot cope with this concept.

Management Education

I compare practical nursing with nursing management and ask the question, is management like nursing, an art or a science? Is it what you learn or is it who you are as a person? By that I mean your attitudes, behaviour, relationships with people, your personal motivation. I have to say it is both.

Many nurses get angry when seeing their colleagues climbing up a hierarchy while they are staying in a clinical situation. Help in these personal areas are likely to improve work performance far more effectively than anything else I know.

Nurse managers are seen as obtaining the higher rewards without the necessary education and preparation to go with it.

In the future I see much greater preparation for nurse managers in the subject areas of personnel and the behavioural sciences, manpower planning, resource allocation, budgeting, use of computers, establishment control, statistics, and particularly those aspects of sociology that teach nurse managers how to review the real needs of the community they serve.

I would wish to see a general degree established whereby promising nurses could, as it were, dip into subject areas of other degree courses at either a University or Polytechnic and earn credits. After obtaining a number of credits a general degree could be awarded.

For all nurse managers I would want to see developing at Diploma level, a whole range of management options in the form of modules.

If management structures are thought through carefully then it should be possible for a nursing officer to act-up for a subject area rather than covering the whole or a more senior person’s job.

Say, for instance, that a senior assistant director had responsibility for service planning, budgeting control and investigating complaints, three nursing officers could take a subject each and over a period of time become knowledgeable on that particular aspect of management backed-up by modules of education.

Facilities should also be made available for nurse managers to conduct research into their various subjects.

Having said all that a nurse may have the appropriate education and experience but without flair, imagination, leadership qualities, and a real understanding of and enjoyment for people, it is doubtful if they will be useful at their work. This aspect of the work is what the manager is as a person.

In conclusion, I see the future of nurse management and nurse managers as secure, bright and full of new challenge. Those who think otherwise may be best taking early retirement. Certainly, most nursing staff are looking for and requiring leadership of the highest quality.

I tried to find a fitting quotation on which to end my paper. The one I was most attracted to was the comment made by Walter Lippmann in 1945 on the death of Roosevelt:

“The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on.”

This paper was originally given at the annual meeting of the National Association of Theatre Nurses in Harrogate in the autumn of 1982.