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EDITORIAL.

THE EIGHT HOUR SYSTEM.

We have always held, and publicly expressed, the opinion that the eight hour system for hospital nurses, *i.e.*, three shifts in the twenty-four hours, is conducive to the best interests neither of the patients nor of the nurse training-schools; and it is interesting to observe that practical experience of this system in New Zealand apparently confirms this view.

Recently, we learn from *Kai Tiaki*, the paper of the New Zealand Nurses, at a conference of delegates from the Hospital Boards, it was decided to enquire from those Hospital Authorities who had instituted an eight hour system for their nursing staffs what their opinions were as to its efficacy or otherwise; and Dr. T. H. Valintine, the Inspector-General of Hospitals, subsequently issued a series of questions to the authorities concerned, asking for an expression of opinion on the points contained in them, and on any others which occurred to those officers of the hospital mainly concerned in the training of the nurses.

The points on which Dr. Valintine asked for information were: (1) The influence of the system on the carrying out of the treatment ordered by the medical staff—whether it is in the best interests of the patient. (2) Its influence on the training of nurses. (3) Its influence on the length of training. (4) Whether it is possible to give experience in theatre work during the time the nurses are actually on duty, or whether they attend operations in their hours off duty. (5) Its influence on the health of the nurses. (6) Its influence on the discipline, and the loyalty of the nurses to their training school. (7) Where the system has extended to the more responsible officers, such as sisters in charge of wards, the influence on their work as trainers of the probationers and as ward managers.

The recommendation of the Hospital Committee adopted by the Board at Wellington is: "That having perused and considered the reports of the Medical Superintendent and Matron upon the working of the eight hours system, this committee from its experience endorses the conclusions arrived at by those officers; and is of the opinion that a re-arrangement of nurses' hours, without strict reference to eight hours per day, and without materially increasing the actual hours of duty will be in the interests of both nurses and patients."

The same average hours on duty could be maintained by periodical long leave.

Some interesting points are raised by a correspondent in *Kai Tiaki* who voices her own views as well as those of others.

The first point is that all the arguments advanced in favour of the system in a previous article in our contemporary are from the nurse's point of view, and all more or less selfish, not bearing so much on the gaining of greater knowledge and proficiency, but on having more time for recreation and pleasure. The one argument from the patient's point of view concerns a type of nurse which seems to be increasing, the "always tired nurse."

The writer says: "Anyone dealing with many nurses must be astonished at the large number who never hesitate to tell their patients how tired and ill they feel, and grumble at the amount of work there is to do, thereby getting the patients to consider them. Thus they say: "Nurse was so tired I did not like to ask her."

Other effects of the eight hours system, we are told, are the "hurrying off duty, the grudging of every few minutes extra that may be required," and "the fearful rush,"—good for neither patient nor nurse.

In short there are very few nurses who have worked under other systems who are in favour of the eight hours.

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