

HEALTH TEACHING IN THE SMALL INDUSTRY *

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There is no group in the nursing profession to whom a greater opportunity is afforded for teaching good health measures and the prevention of disease than is afforded to those nurses employed in industry. They come in contact with a vast number of workers from every walk of life, and in almost every contact there is to be found an opportunity to teach. The industrial nurse, having at heart the best interests of her profession and of society, will appreciate this responsibility. In our larger industries a full programme of health and safety is mapped out and is supervised by well qualified individuals. Usually one or more doctors are in attendance, not only for emergencies, but to look after the health and welfare of the employees.

There is a special challenge, however, for the nurse in the smaller industry where the number of employees may range from a few hundred to possibly one thousand. The majority of these industries do not have a doctor except for accidents. He may be present an hour or two each day, or perhaps not at all unless he is called for a serious injury. However, even though her plant does not provide a large budget with which to work, or a doctor to treat ill employees, much good health work can be accomplished by the industrial nurse who has initiative and the will to work.

No definite plan or formula can be laid out as a pattern for every industrial nurse to follow, since each industry has its own possibilities and limitations depending to a large extent upon the policy and interest of the employer. Each nurse must use all her resourcefulness and tact in gradually developing a sound health programme, the value and economy of which the employer will recognize.

The nurse's first step in planning a health programme is to inspire confidence and to secure the good will of the employees. If they believe she is interested in them, they will come to her with their health problems, both physical and mental. In a smaller plant the nurse may eventually learn the social, economic, and family history of almost every individual. Such information can be gathered through tactful questioning and conversation during a minor treatment. Few will resent this or feel that idle curiosity prompts her. On the other hand, many enjoy these informal conversations and profit by having a sympathetic listener and adviser. Thus, health lessons may be taught to advantage, even though there is no other contact with the employee than that taking place in the shop.

Health of the Worker's Family.

Lessons in health and the help and advice of the nurse may be given also to the families of employees. Let me cite an example. An employee may remark, while the nurse is giving him a treatment, that his wife

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is expecting a baby. This offers an opportunity to find out if she is having the necessary pre-natal care. All too often she has had no medical supervision, and not infrequently the nurse's explanation of why she should seek such care, is relayed to the wife by the husband, with the result that the expectant mother visits her doctor or the clinic for necessary examinations and care.

Then, too, the nurse usually knows in which homes there are children, particularly if there are infants or children of pre-school age. One of the most common questions asked by employees about their children is with regard to the advisability of immunisation procedures for the prevention of communicable diseases. The nurse in industry should be familiar with correct answers to questions of this nature. She can do a great deal to overcome the superstitions and misinformation which she so often encounters concerning matters of health. Every industrial nurse is familiar, for example, with the copper wire wound about wrists or ankles to ward off rheumatism and other ills.

As she gives a treatment, it is an easy matter to explain in a simple manner why she uses certain aseptic procedures and to show how they may be carried out in the home when minor injuries occur there. Doubtless many infections have been prevented because of these instructions by the nurse in the shop.

Early Care is Economy.

In most industries, illnesses of employees are reported to the nurse. If an employee is taken ill at work he is sent to the nurse before going home. She should be able to recognize symptoms of communicable diseases, be familiar with the health regulations of her community and know the community resources for care. After an illness, the employee should report to the nurse before returning to work. If he has been under medical care, a statement from the doctor that he is able to work is advisable. In cases of pulmonary conditions, cardiac disease, and other illnesses of a serious nature, the nurse should see that the employee goes back to his family physician or to a clinic for a periodic examination. The industrial nurse can do much to encourage pre-employment and annual physical examinations for industrial workers. If these examinations are given by the company doctor, defects may be brought to the attention of and treated by the employee's family physician. Co-operation of the industrial nurse with the family physician will benefit all concerned, the employer as well as the worker, since an employee in good physical and mental health is a decided asset to industry.

The diet of the industrial worker is often inadequate and improperly balanced. This may be due to carelessness, but more often it is the result of lack of knowledge. He is not familiar with the important part his food plays in regulating body processes and supplying the energy necessary for his day of labour. The industrial nurse may advise as to nourishing qualities of foods and give information in regard to care of food in the home.

Use of Bulletin Board for Health Instruction.

Another effective means of reaching employees with health instruction is through the use of the bulletin board. Bulletin boards throughout the plant may be used for safety instruction, while those in the dressing-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)