

Role of nursing in community health

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Service rendered by professional nurse to the community, groups, families, and individuals at home, in health centers, clinics, schools, places of work for promotion of health, prevention of illness, care of the sick at home and rehabilitation is called community health nursing.

While most nurses care for one patient at a time, public health nurses care for entire populations. Role of Public Health Nurse is particularly important in developing countries like India because a large section of community is not able to access the health infrastructure.

The objectives of the public health nurse should be:

1. To participate in the development of an overall health plan for the community
2. To provide quality nursing services to the people
3. To co-ordinate nursing services with various members of the health team
4. To participate/conduct research relevant to community health

These objectives are based on certain public health principles which are given below:

1. Based on recognized needs of the communities, families and individuals
2. Family is the unit of the service
3. Providing services to all without any discrimination

Primary responsibility of the public health nurse is the health education. Other responsibilities include usage of available resources judiciously, recording and reporting of the health events/activities, priority to health promotion and disease prevention over curative services and application of principles of management and organization in health care delivery.

It should be a mission approach which include maintaining good relation between community and health team, health promotion activities especially life style diseases, focus on smart eating, health protection through prevention or alteration the disease process through cost effective measures such as immunization, and exclusive breastfeeding, etc.). She should also ensure social justice which delivering services through one of the principles of primary health care that is equitable distribution of health care services without making any discrimination between rich and poor, rural and urban, male and females etc.

She has been key health personnel in the community especially when medical officers are not available due to certain constraints, a situation commonly seen in rural areas of India. She can be very effective in reducing the infant and maternal mortality rates in the community. Infant mortality rate has been considered as the most sensitive indicator of health of a nation, state, and community. She may be helpful in averting these deaths by timely referral to higher centers. She should focus more on registration of pregnant females for antenatal checkup (ANC) and provide essential health services with the help of Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), a voluntary health worker employed under National Health Mission. For this she needs periodic orientation regularly.

At last it can be concluded that disease does not occur by chance. Several socio-cultural, economic, environmental and genetic factors which influence health can only be understood at the community level by health personnel such as Public Health Nurse. Mothers and children form an important high risk group, so special emphasis should be given to understand their problems and finding solutions to them. It is the role of a Community Health Nurse to improve the health of mothers and children and other at risk population. If homes are healthy society and country will be healthy.

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