

COMMUNITY NURSING CARE FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED

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OPSOMMING

Die mees doeltreffende sorg vir die geestesvertraagde is die omvattende gesinsgeoriënteerde sorg van die multidisiplinêre span.

As lid van hierdie span is die gemeenskapsverpleegkundige besig met die voorkoming van geestesvertraagtheid en die bevordering van normalisering deur stimulering van gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid en die hantering van individuele gevalle.

Die oogmerk van gemeenskapsverpleegkunde is die daarstelling van 'n gelukkige en gesonde gesins-omgewing vir die geestesvertraagde in die gemeenskap en die rehabilitasie van geïnstitusionele geestesvertraagdes in die gemeenskapslewe.

Community care for the mentally retarded takes cognisance of the many facets of care required and available for the mentally retarded.

Community care may be regarded as care provided by the general public for the mentally retarded in their midst as well as care provided by the professionals, particularly health and teaching professions, for the mentally retarded in the community.

Tasks of the Community Nurse are:-

- Co-ordination of services for the mentally retarded
- Education of public and professionals
- Assessment and planning
- Counselling and support
- Training and rehabilitation of the mentally retarded for community living
- Placement in the community and supervision.

In order to facilitate the aforementioned optimum care the nurse functions as a member of a multidisciplinary team, which includes a psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, occupational therapist, physiotherapist and teacher.

At times this team may include other professionals in the community e.g. health visitor, general practitioner, outside social welfare agency, minister of religion, etc.

The multidisciplinary team approach is currently viewed as the only way of providing all the requirements for the mentally retarded. Two influential reports point towards such an approach:-

- The Report of the Committee on Child Health Services (England, 1976)⁽¹⁾ and
- Special Educational Needs - Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People, 1978.⁽²⁾

The aim of the multidisciplinary team is to provide support in order that the mentally retarded and his family may live a full and happy life.

"Albert Kushlick recognised that parents provide the best caring service for mentally retarded children".⁽³⁾

Parents can give the child love, bonding and socialisation experiences, especially teaching them the norms and values of society, which cannot be learnt in an institution.

This defines the community nurse's task further, into one which aims at keeping the mentally retarded child in his home environment with as little time as possible spent in institutions.

Years of institutionalisation and custodial care have left a legacy of persons whom the nurse, today, must rehabilitate into family life and the community.

The daily discovery of clients of all ages, in the community, whose training and education have been neglected, is yet another area in which the nurse is active in rehabilitation.

THE NURSE'S ROLE REGARDING THE PREVENTION OF MENTAL RETARDATION AND PROMOTING OF CARE FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED BY THE COMMUNITY

1. As with all health problems *prevention* is better than cure and the nurse must educate and guide the community in this regard.

The authorities and the general public, particularly potential parents, need to be made aware of the medical and psycho-social factors which can increase the incidence of mental retardation. Alcoholism in the mother and malnutrition of the infant are but two high risk medical conditions.

Social stress e.g. poor housing, insufficient income, may cause emotional problems in the family

Nursing The Mentally Retarded

Mike Jess



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Nursing The Mentally Retarded :

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