Mental Handicap

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Contents

<i>The contributors</i>	v
<i>Foreword to the series</i>	ix
<i>Foreword</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii
<i>A note on the series style</i>	xiii
1 Introduction (by Anthony R. Thompson)	1
The philosophy	1
Mental handicap nursing — a skill-based activity	2
Towards competency	2
The learning experience	3
2 Through my eyes — one nursing student's view (by Karen Morgan)	7
Becoming a student	7
Role play	7
Coping with frustrations	8
The evaluation process	8
The second year	9
The third year	9
Coping with death	10
Experience in the community	10
Professional responsibility	11
The future	12
3 Human rights and mental handicap (by Alison Morton-Cooper)	14
Introduction	14
What we expect of a civilised society	14
Examining attitudes and beliefs	15
Key concepts in carer advocacy	15
An exploration of human rights	16
Dealing with prejudices and fears	17
Educating ourselves to care constructively	18
4 A close look at relationships (by Amanda Gunner)	21
Dilemmas facing the family	22
Bereavement	23
The nurse and communication skills	24
The socialisation process	25
Crisis intervention in relationships	26
Client education	26
Conclusion	29

5	Caring in the community (by Gillian James)	30
	Introducing the concept of community care	30
	Community care, philosophy and networking	30
	Planning, developing and reviewing need	31
	Teamwork approach	31
	Community resources	34
	Community structure and models of care	35
	Planning and management of community mental handicap services	36
6	Alternatives to community care (by Mary Birchenall)	38
	The nurse and self-awareness	38
	Basic skill requirements	38
	Care of the profoundly handicapped person	41
	Care of the moderately mentally handicapped person	43
	The move towards independence	45
	Worthwhile aims	45
7	The nurse as teacher and therapist (by Pat Brudenell)	47
	The nurse as educator	47
	Nursing and therapy	54
8	Research-mindedness in client care (by Tom Keighley)	59
	How to become research-minded	59
	How to nurse in a research-minded manner	66
	Conclusion	67
9	Person to person (by Alison Morton-Cooper)	69
	Understanding each other	69
	Acquiring new skills	71
	Sexuality and mental handicap	71
10	The spiritual dimension (by Peter Birchenall)	74
	Spiritual care and normalisation	74
	The role of the Church	77
	The role of the nurse in spiritual care	78
	Conclusion	79
	Useful addresses	81
	Index	83

Foreword to the series

This series of textbooks offers a fresh approach to the study of nursing. The aim is to give those beginning a career in nursing, and those already qualified, opportunities for reflection to broaden their approach to nursing education and to identify their own nursing values. The text includes material currently required by those preparing for qualification as a nurse and offers a basis for developing knowledge by individual studies. It should also assist qualified nurses returning to nursing, and those wishing to gain further insight into the nursing curriculum.

The authors of each book in the series are from widely differing nursing backgrounds, and, as experienced teachers of nursing or midwifery, they are well aware of the difficulties faced by nursing students searching for meaning from a mass of factual information. The nurse has to practise in the real world, and in reality nursing students need to learn to practise with confidence and understanding. The authors have therefore collaborated to illustrate this new perspective by making full use of individual nursing care plans to present the knowledge required by the nursing student in the most appropriate and relevant way. These textbooks can therefore be used in a wide variety of nursing programmes.

The practice of nursing—as a profession and as a career—and the education of the nurse to fulfil her role are both affected by national and international trends. The Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979 in the United Kingdom, the Treaty of Rome and the European Community nursing directives 1977, as well as the deliberations and publications of the International Council of Nurses and the World Health Organization, all make an impact upon the preparation and the practice of the nurse throughout the world.

Nursing values may not have changed over the past one hundred years, but society and the patterns of both life and care have changed, and are constantly changing. It is particularly important, therefore, to restate the essentials of nursing in the light of current practice and future trends.

Throughout this series the focus is on nursing and on the individual—the person requiring care and the person giving care—and emphasises the need for continuity between home and hospital care. *Neighbourhood Nursing—A Focus for Care*, the Report of the Community Nursing Review under the chairmanship of Julia Cumberlege (HMSO, 1986) has drawn attention to this need. The developing role of the nurse in primary care and in health education is reflected throughout this series. The authors place their emphasis on the whole person, and nursing care studies and care plans are used to promote understanding of the clinical, social, psychological and spiritual aspects of care for the individual.

Each book introduces the various aspects of the curriculum for general nursing: the special needs of (1) those requiring acute care; (2) the elderly; (3) children; (4) the mentally ill; and (5) the mentally handicapped. The last is a new text in *The Essentials of Nursing*—edited by a well-known and respected nurse for the mentally handicapped and with contributors experienced in differing aspects of caring for people with mental handicap. The text on maternity and neonatal care, written by a midwifery teacher, provides the material for nursing students and would be helpful to those undertaking preparation for further health visiting education.

The authors wish to acknowledge their gratitude for the assistance they have received from members of the Editorial Board, and from all those who have contributed to their work—patients and their relatives, students, qualified nurses and colleagues—too numerous to mention by name. To all those nurse teachers who have read some of the texts, offering constructive criticism and comment from their special knowledge, we offer our grateful thanks.

Foreword

Mental handicap is a central issue in health care provision for today and tomorrow. For over 20 years I have been President of the Croydon Branch of the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults and I have taken a close interest in St Lawrence's Hospital, Caterham. It is particularly rewarding, therefore, to be associated with a team responsible for developing this text in The Essentials of Nursing series. The hallmark of all those involved with this book—Sheila Collins, Alan Parrish and the contributors—is their genuine and professional commitment to improving the standard of care and provision for mentally handicapped people. The content of this book emphasises that the mentally handicapped person is an individual with his own rights, and needs to be given an opportunity to live as an integral member of his local community. It is a positive book, about facing and solving problems practically and cheerfully.

I warmly recommend the book to students, nurses, teachers, parents and all those whose life and work brings them in close contact with mentally handicapped people. I hope that all of you will be enriched by the themes and ideas developed.

Bernard Weatherill

Preface

This book is designed to offer to readers an introduction to mental handicap nursing. It has been added to the six books in The Essentials of Nursing series, to focus on particular issues which arise in this specialised form of nursing.

Mental handicap nursing is about helping people with a mental handicap and their relatives to experience a normal way of life—enjoying the things we so often take for granted. The nurse encourages the person to learn, and while providing care, promotes an environment in which the values, customs and spiritual beliefs of the individual are respected in a rapidly changing society. Such nursing is based on the recognition that each person has a right to make choices, and to be involved in activities which help him to develop his full potential.

The work is demanding, and calls for special aptitude, for patience, for an understanding that each person is unique, and for co-operation between a wide variety of people from different professional backgrounds whose aim is to educate and help people with mental handicap. Skills based on knowledge and an awareness of the complexity of the issues which arise in such teamwork are essential—and are acquired by learning from the experience in a supportive and caring setting.

This text is intended for those following a course of preparation for registration as a nurse for the mentally handicapped, to be used in conjunction with the other books in the series: in particular, *Essentials of Nursing—An Introduction*, *Care of the Child* and *Care of the Elderly*. It may also assist nurses already qualified or those returning to practise in this form of caring. At this time, when the nurse's role is extending, when the emphasis is on care in the community and in residential settings, and when expectations of a fully comprehensive service for mentally handicapped people have yet to be realised, it is vital that the nurse be fully aware of the sources of help and the resources needed to meet the challenges and uncertainties of the future.

Throughout the series the aim is to clarify the differences between disability, handicap and disease, and to identify the role of the nurse, in health education and in promoting health.

This book, an addition to the series, draws together the collective thoughts of eight experienced nurses each of whom strongly believes in the need to share their knowledge and skills, to foster and maintain the contribution the nurse makes to this special service to humanity.

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A.P.

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A note on the series style

Throughout this book, in keeping with the other titles in this series, the term *nursing student* has been used to mean *both* student or pupil nurses *and* trained nurses who are undertaking post-basic training or who are keeping up to date with the recent literature. For clarity and consistency throughout the series the nurse is described as *she*; this is done without prejudice to men who are nurses or nursing students. Similarly, the patient is sometimes referred to as *he*, when the gender is not specifically mentioned.

Care plans, which are used throughout the books in this series, are indicated by a coloured corner flash to distinguish them from the rest of the text.