The Other Side of Medical Care

The 'New Approaches to Care' series

Patients are people. They have feelings, families and fears. Whatever the cause for their seeking help, the caring professional will find that he or she will be concerned with these other issues. All illness carries with it anxiety and each person has very individual and important feelings about it; feelings which can easily be forgotten or neglected when nurses become preoccupied with the details of treatments, procedures and ward routines.

The *New Approaches to Care* series aims to explore this 'other side' of care in a practical and realistic way, emphasising the importance of meeting all the patients' needs, while recognising the constraints and problems which so often make the 'other side' the forgotten side of patient care.

The books in this series examine the implications that treatments, procedures, investigations and routines can have for patients and their families. They also aim to help nurses gain some insight into the problems, feelings and anxieties which people can experience when they are being looked after in hospital or the community. The series will thus offer a tangible starting point for all nurses and other professionals, both in training and in practice, to give their patients the most complete and understanding care possible.

Series Editors

June Jolly, SRN, RSCN, has devoted most of her nursing career to the care of sick children, and was involved with establishing a new paediatric unit at Brook General Hospital, Woolwich.

Jill Macleod Clark, BSc, PhD, SRN, is a Lecturer in the Department of Nursing Studies, Chelsea College, University of London.

Will Bridge, BSc, PhD, is the Co-ordinator of the Learning Resources Unit at Brighton Polytechnic.

Other titles in this series

The Other Side of Growing Older Pat Brown

The Other Side of Paediatrics June Jolly

The Other Side of Psychiatric Care Margaret Garland

The Other Side of Surgery Janet Gooch

The tender word forgotten,
The letter you did not write,
The flower you might have sent, dear,
Are your haunting ghosts tonight.

Margaret Sangster (1838-1912),
At Sunset

To B.S. — without her unfailing support this book would
never have been written.

The Other Side of Medical Care

Carol Flemming

Illustrated by
Gillian Symonds, ARCA

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First published 1986

Published by
MACMILLAN EDUCATION LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

Typeset by TecSet Ltd, Sutton, Surrey

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Flemming, Carol

The other side of medical care. — (New approaches to care)

1. Hospital care

I. Title II. Series

362.1'1 RA971

ISBN 978-0-333-37528-0 ISBN 978-1-349-18179-7 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-18179-7

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Preface

This book is one of a series about people. People who find themselves, for whatever reason, dependent upon others as they recover from illness.

The purpose of this series, called 'New Approaches to Care', is to demonstrate that all patients, no matter how old or young, are individuals and that nurses have a responsibility to maintain their patients' self-respect and to give them the best care possible. June Jolly started the series with *The Other Side of Paediatrics*, concentrating on the needs of children in hospital; this was followed by Pat Brown's *The Other Side of Growing Older*, moving the emphasis to those 'at the other end' of their life. Margaret Garland wrote *The Other Side of Psychiatric Care*, which was followed by *The Other Side of Surgery*, by Janet Gooch. Throughout the series there have been many examples of many people whose lives have been disrupted by illness.

Most patients find hospital admission a traumatic experience and most medical conditions are frightening in themselves, perhaps because of pain or fear of what the diagnosis might be, or the threat to one's independence in the face of ill health. Many of the people I have described in this book have had to face a future of ill health as well, for many medical conditions do not 'get better': they can only be controlled. This is the challenge to all nurses involved in this field – to show compassion and humanity to the many people requiring care for however long the illness may continue.

My own belief is that the nurse is there to help the patient and his family – together – to cope with illness and recovery. I would be the first to agree that this demands much more

from the nurse than the old system of 'getting the job done', but I insist that the nurse and the patient together will find greater rewards.

Throughout the book the unnamed patient is referred to as 'he', merely for ease of expression and the convenience of readers. For the same reason all staff are referred to in the female gender.

Brighton, 1985

C.A.F.

Foreword

I consider it a privilege to be asked to write the foreword for this book. Carol Flemming believes deeply in the need to nurse patients as individual people with unique needs. In this text she has responded to the challenge to explain that belief as it relates to the patients in medical wards. The combination of medical nursing and her commitment to patients as people makes the book unique.

She asks the reader to accept the deeper involvement with patients and their families that is essential to an understanding of their true needs. She recognises the feelings of nurses within such relationships and offers support by that understanding. She shares the insight developed in her experience as a staff nurse and a ward sister in such a way that learners will be stimulated into trying to emulate her really caring approach.

The text presents its important information in a manner that is easily read and understood. I am sure that any nurses involved in this field will find it valuable — whether they be ward staff, managers or teachers.

The author is a valued colleague and I wish her every success with this her first book.

Janet Gooch

Acknowledgements

So many people have contributed to the making of this book directly and indirectly, and I wish to thank them. This is by no means a complete list.

It is largely due to Janet Gooch, who wrote *The Other Side of Surgery*, that this book ever came to be written, and she has continually offered her experience and support. June Jolly, author of *The Other Side of Paediatrics*, has helped shape ideas into the written word. Elizabeth Horne, then Macmillans' nursing editor, never failed to restock my failing enthusiasm, and this task has now passed on to Mary Hoddinott. It has been a great pleasure to meet and work with Gillian Simmonds, the artist, and I am much indebted to her for bringing to life so vividly some of the concepts I have tried to express.

To Eric Evans, my nurse tutor of many years ago, I give thanks for teaching me that learning can be fun. Alan Boylan, Tina Poxon and Margaret Deans from the Brighton School of Nursing have helped me work out in practice the theory that patients are the most important people on the ward. Sue Marshall, Superintendent Physiotherapist, and Lesley Watson, Occupational Therapist, have given me invaluable help with Chapter 9. A special 'thank you' to Bonnie, who has so patiently read and reread manuscripts and has offered so much encouragement.

This is very much a practical book, written from experience, and there would be no experience but for the patients I have had the privilege to meet over the years. It is for them, and for those who will continue to care for them, that this book is written.