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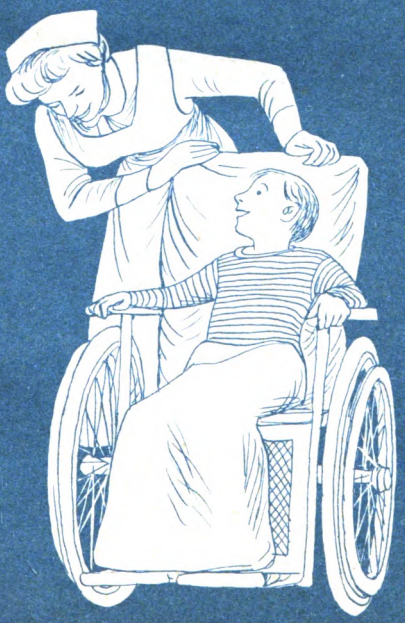
WHAT GOOD NURSING MEANS TO YOU

BY SUSIE BERG WALDMAN

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PAMPHLET No. 60A



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WHAT GOOD NURSING MEANS TO YOU

BY SUSIE BERG WALDMAN

A magazine writer and editor for the past ten years, Mrs. Waldman was, until recently, on the staff of Newsweek's *Club and Educational Bureau, where she wrote numerous pamphlets on health and other topics of current interest . . . Bunji Tagawa prepared the charts and drawings.*

AS THE ROBINSONS drove up to the new Community Hospital with their seven-year-old, Timmy, their anxiety mounted. From her own childhood, Mrs. Robinson remembered the hospital as a big, forbidding, strange, and even dangerous place; and anyway, Timmy was so small—what would he think of being left, in a large, unfamiliar place, without his parents within calling distance for the first time in his young life? Mr. Robinson was trying to keep back the doubts he shared with his wife; mustn't let Timmy feel *our* fears, he reasoned. He tried to focus his mind instead on Dr. Montgomery's reassuring verdict on their young son's rheumatic fever. "Timmy will be walking and running like anyone else someday," the doctor had told the Robinsons confidently.

Dr. Montgomery had said that Timmy would be better off in the hospital during the acute phase of his disease. Although Timmy's heart did not seem to be affected, there is always danger of heart involvement and it was advisable for Timmy to be under the constant supervision of nurses during the first weeks of his long treatment. Still, though they knew it was wise, the Robinsons were nervous about leaving Timmy in the hands of strangers.

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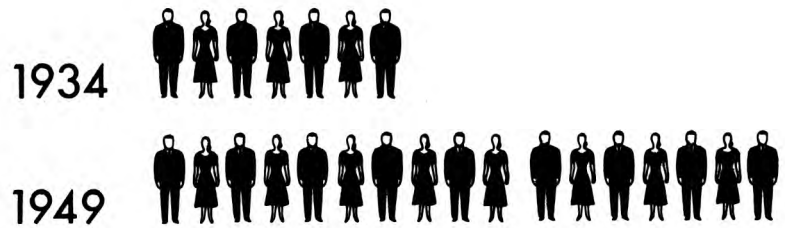
lowest it has ever been. Moreover, with the help of modern medical and scientific advances—and the nursing care to put them into practice—the average citizen is living longer; life expectancy in 1955 was 20 years greater than in 1900.

Rise in Hospital Admissions



Each symbol represents one million admissions

While the population has been increasing, a larger and larger number of our citizens have been using hospitals. Indeed, hospital use has been growing even more rapidly than the rate of population increase. In the fifteen-year period between 1934 and 1949, for instance, the number of people using hospitals more than doubled—admissions rose from seven million to seventeen million. And hospital use has continued to rise since the end of World War II; there were almost 2,500,000 more hospital patients, for example, in 1952 than there were in 1948.

Why has there been such a steady and striking increase in the number of hospital patients? One of the main reasons is that more people who need hospital care are able to obtain it. It is only recently that the majority of citizens have been able to afford hospital care. Hospital prepayment plans were virtually unheard of twenty years ago; today they have grown into a nation-wide movement which has soared to the point where 104,000,000 men, women, and children in the United States were covered by the summer of 1955.

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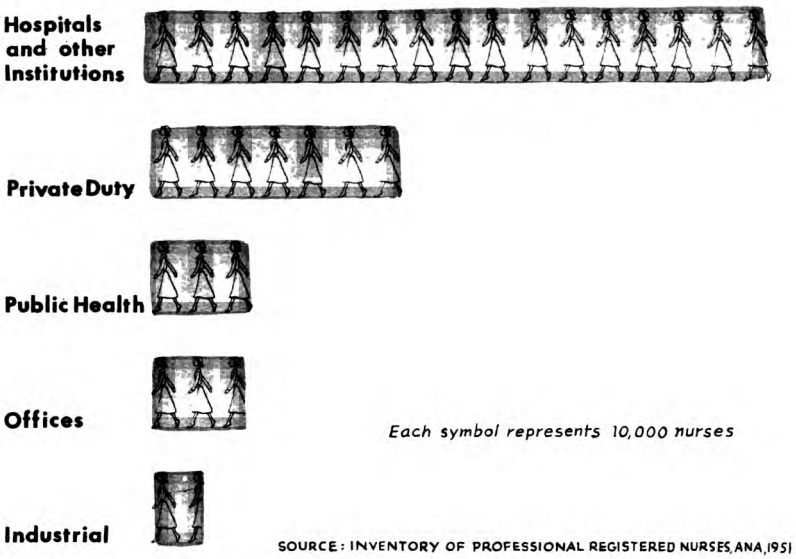
Major Fields of Nursing Practice



Red Cross, and other international health organizations require nurse personnel to help shoulder their grave responsibilities for emergency health care during disasters and for their regular programs of care and health education both in the United States and in other countries. Viewed against this broad and ever-expanding canvas of health services, modern nursing is faced with meeting an overwhelming demand.

new concerns

At the same time that these demands for nursing service are rising in number, they are changing in nature. The practice of nursing is changing as it adapts to broader goals and new concepts and practices of good health care.

The changes in the field of health over even the past two decades have been startling. New drugs have virtually wiped out some of the

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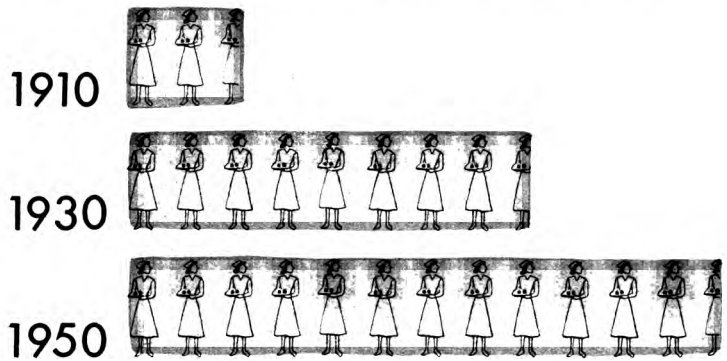
Active Graduate Nurses in The U.S.



Each symbol represents 20 nurses per 100,000 population

Nurse educators, administrators, and supervisors are at a premium. The demand for nurses to fill these key positions is urgent and unfilled. To illustrate, the American Nurses' Association's Professional Counseling and Placement Service, which lists close to 13,000 nursing positions a year, is currently unable to fill approximately one-third of its requests for nursing personnel. The most critical shortage is in the field of nursing education.

Nursing schools are forced to make do with a smaller faculty than they need to handle the student enrollment, or with fewer qualified nurse faculty members. But hospitals, too, are often hard-pressed for the kind of personnel necessary to train and administer a well-functioning staff.

The demands on nursing education have grown tremendously. More nurses in more fields need degrees today, and too few are financially able to get them. In public health nursing the trend is toward preparation beyond the school of nursing diploma. Between 1947 and 1953, the ratio of public health nurses with college degrees rose from one out of seven to one out of four. Yet 69 per cent of the staff nurses in the public health field have not completed a year of academic study in their specialized field.

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between $3,900 and $3,999; staff public health nurses in local official health units averaged $3,600 a year.

By far the best paid of all nurses are those employed by the federal government, both under the U. S. Civil Service and under the Veterans' Administration. Beginning nurse salaries under civil service range from $3,670 to $4,480 in 1955, with a beginning public health nurse receiving between $4,525 and $5,335; a supervisor between $5,440 and $6,250; and the director of nursing service between $7,570 and $10,065. Nurses in the armed services are commissioned officers and are paid according to rank. The beginning ranks in each of the services start at $3,247, and lieutenants (lieutenants j. g. in the Navy) can receive as much as $5,535. The pay of senior officers runs up to $10,308 for the directors of the corps.

However, only a small fraction of nurses work for the federal government, either in civilian or military capacity. On the whole, the profession, by any fair standard of judgment, is an ill-paid profession. The average yearly income of professional nurses is estimated at below $3,000; and it is typical for the director of nursing service, highest on the scale of hospital nursing careers, to be earning $4,200.

Nursing is an underpaid profession

MEDIAN INCOME IN 1949 OF FEMALE PROFESSIONALS



SOURCE: 1950 CENSUS OF POPULATION

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