

Nursing in the Community

an essential guide to practice



Sue Chilton, Karen Melling, Dee Drew and Ann Clarridge

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Foreword

Nurses working in all community settings are experiencing unprecedented change. It is driven by many factors: demographic shifts, higher rates of chronic disease, health policy, increasingly better engaged patients, social and economic developments, and progress in medical and other technologies and in nursing practice – to name the key factors. The interplay of these variables is dynamic and inter-dependent. Health policy, for example, addresses the impact of changes in the demographic make-up both in the population and in the workforce, while changing social mores and expectations demand health policies that recognise the primacy of the patient at the heart of decision making and choice. For nurses, each of the factors is powerful enough in its own right to prompt significant change: together, they form an irresistible force. The demand for nurses and expectations of nursing will rise exponentially as the new world unfolds. More nurses will be working outside of hospitals; more of them will have specialist or expert skills; many will continue as generalists offering flexible and accessible care in a variety of settings including the home. Nurses will practice in multi-disciplinary teams as members and as leaders; their work will cross organisational boundaries, and will be built on partnerships – none more vital than the partnerships with their patients and the communities they serve. They will help patients understand the choices available to them, and in expanding their skills and expertise, they themselves will increase the options on offer. We shall see more nurse entrepreneurs offering family health services or primary care for vulnerable groups. We shall see nurses as care managers, overseeing all aspects of provision for at-risk older people.

This book provides a timely resource on the context and processes of working in the community for those new to this environment, and is an important reminder for those not so new. As is made clear, nursing outside of hospital isn't just a change of setting. It is a different way of thinking, of acting and of being with local people and communities so that capacity and resources for health are increased and enhanced.

Though we speak of future needs, let us not be daunted by how much there is to do. Let us instead be encouraged by how far we have come. This book reflects powerful developments in nursing practice in the community that have taken place in recent years. It shows that none are more likely to adapt to and adopt change than community nurses themselves, who understand more than most what will best improve the care of their patients.

Sarah Mullally 2004

Acknowledgements

The idea for this book originated from the many enquiries that members of the Association of District Nurse Educators (ADNE) received requesting further information on working and 'surviving' in the community. With this in mind, all the contributors hope that this guide to practice will prove useful.

The book could not have been written without the ongoing support of the members of the Association of District Nurse Educators (ADNE) www.adne.com and from experts representing the various disciplines from the community specialist pathways.

Note on terminology and abbreviations

Below is an explanation of some of the terms favoured in the text of this book.

Patient: It is recognised that some groups of community nurses use other terminology in preference to patient, such as client or user.

Community specialist nurses: This term is intended to include occupational health nurses, health visitors, public health nurses, community children's nurses, community learning disability nurses, community psychiatric nurses, school nurses, district nurses, and general practice nurses. These practitioners have undertaken further programmes of education, which have been registered or recorded with the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

Community staff nurses: These qualified nurses work in teams under the guidance of a community specialist nurse.

She: Nurses are referred to throughout as she, although it is recognised that there are many male community nurses working in Britain. The use of both he and she would have been clumsy, and to use 'he' by preference would have seemed inappropriate when most nurses are female.

The following sets of initials have been used in the text when making reference to literature published by these bodies: BMA: British Medical Association; CPHVA: Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association; DHSS: Department of Health and Social Security; DOE: Department of Education; DOH: Department of Health; HMSO: Her Majesty's Stationery Office; HSE: Health and Safety Executive; HVA: Health Visitors Association; NHS: National Health Service; NHSME: NHS Management Executive; NMC: Nursing and Midwifery Council; RCGP: Royal College of General Practitioners; RCN: Royal College of Nursing; UKCC: UK Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.