

Why Women Choose To Become Nurses Is Discussed In UA Master's Thesis

Factors influencing the selection of a career in nursing by high school girls is the topic of a Master of Science thesis completed at the University of Alabama.

Miss Marie L. O'Koren, candidate for the M.S. degree in nursing at the Aug. 22 commencement found: (1) a desire to help others and (2) influence of the family were strong factors in leading a young woman to choose nursing as a career.

State Needs Nurses

Although her study was limited to Tuscaloosa County, the implications for all Alabama are obvious. The national ratio of active nurses per 100,000 population is 258. A shortage exists and is especially acute in the South where the ratio is 185 nurses per 100,000 and in Alabama where it is even lower, namely, 132 nurses for each 100,000.

It was the author's feeling that "if the factors which decide whether a girl will choose nursing could be discovered and investigated, an increase in girls who choose to become nurses could be brought about."

The UA graduate student attempted to find out from Tuscaloosa county high school junior and senior girls (1) what the attitudes were toward nursing education, as well as what knowledge existed of the facilities available for this training, (2) what the attitude was on nursing as a career, (3) individuals who influence the selection of nursing as a career, (4) common reasons for choosing nursing as a career, and (5) how well high school vocational guidance programs function in this area.

Forms of Education

Miss O'Koren found that a lack of knowledge existed of various forms of nursing education, such as the diploma program in connection with a hospital, and the collegiate program whereby the student gets a college degree while becoming a registered nurse. High school students seem-

ed to know little about the cost of such programs, or the advantages and disadvantages of either system of education.

Concerning the factors which determine the choice of nursing as a career, research disclosed that the reason most often given was "a desire to help others". This reason led by a large majority, but was followed by such others as "desire to help the country's armed services", and "seeing nurses in action on visits to hospitals." The reason most frequently given for not choosing to become a nurse was "lack of information about nursing."

Family Influences Girl

In Tuscaloosa county, it is the family who most often influences a girl to become a nurse, according to Miss O'Koren. The mother was listed as the most usual member of the family to exert this influence. After her, various members of the family were cited as having an effect on the decision. After the family in influence came the graduate nurse, the student nurse, doctors, friends, teachers or counselors in school, and pastors.

Miss O'Koren found that the high school vocational guidance program was not functioning as well as it could in recruiting nurses. She found that where Future Nurses clubs exist, they exert a great influence, but she suggests that they be set up in more schools, and that professional nurses help more in planning and executing their programs. Miss O'Koren believes that in schools which do not have a school nurse, county public health nurses can be of great help.

Ways To Attract Students

She asked the high school students to suggest ways in which they thought more girls could be attracted to the profession. Improvement of Future Nurses clubs where they exist, and creation of them in schools where they do not now operate were

two suggestions high on their list. Tours of hospitals, observations of student nurses in training, more emphasis on the opportunities and varied types of careers in nursing, and more information of a realistic nature about nursing were also suggested.

The factors found not to influence the choice of nursing were length of time nursing preparation required, educational quality of nursing education as compared with other fields, salaries of nurses, number and types of positions open to nurses, opportunities for social life in nursing, and climate of working conditions. Most students felt that these factors were as good, or better for a nurse as for those of women engaged in any other profession. These factors would not keep them from choosing nursing, therefore.

In view of the fact that 96 per cent of the students who said they would choose nursing as a career stated that they would need some form of financial assistance while they were in school, Miss O'Koren suggests that more scholarships and loan funds be made available, and that more high school students be informed about funds which already exist.

1958