

## AN OPEN LETTER TO A NURSING COLLEAGUE - 2000

Community nursing is fascinating and challenging, and I find it to be a great personal pleasure and an opportunity to practice the ART of nursing. It's much more than just treating symptoms, it's preventing further illness and promoting wellness. It's creating a climate that encourages a positive attitude to ageing and the motivation to continue to do those things that can maintain a quality of life. My role is interesting and always evolving. In the course of a usual working day, I will see nine to twelve clients - usually in their homes, but sometimes at the Day Respite Centre where they have gone for social interaction or to give their Carers a welcome break. My clients are scattered along the Range, from Mapleton to Montville, and most days I drive 40 kms or more as I travel from home to home.

Nursing assessment is on-going, and as well, I attend to symptom control, health education which includes exercise and nutrition information, wound management, podiatry, medication, monitoring of blood sugar levels, blood pressure and weight, therapeutic massage, personal care, bereavement help and counselling. This list is by no means exhaustive, and every nurse who works in the community knows that there can be a multitude of other little jobs that need to be done. Like digging the hole and burying a recently-deceased pet dog. Like rounding up the cattle that have escaped through the paddock fence. And like eating icecream with the small child whose mother has died.

A number of hours of every day are spent in documentation writing up the nursing management and interventions in the charts of individual clients. Time is also spent in liaising with doctors and other health professionals and in planning care with other members of the Blackall Range Care Group team. Computers are relatively new to nursing, and at this time, all information is hand written; the exception being the recording of statistics.

I hope that you will find the following information interesting, but please be aware that it is based on my own observations within my practice, and therefore may conflict with formal statistics.

\*Most of my nursing clients are aged between seventy-five and ninety years of age.

\*Approximately half of them live alone in their own homes, and the other 50% live either with their spouse or with one of their children.

\*A great majority of clients move into a nursing home or are admitted to hospital when they become very frail and in the terminal phase of life. Younger palliative care clients are the exception, and many of these choose to die at home.

\*The most common medical conditions amongst my clients are hip and knee degeneration due to osteo or rheumatoid arthritis, Alzheimer's-type dementia, Parkinson's disease, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, cataracts, carcinoma (prostate, colon, lung), skin cancers, urinary incontinence and depression.

### A BIT ABOUT ME

My name is Pam Hulme and I am the Clinical Nurse Specialist with the Blackall Range Care Group. My nurse specialities are in the areas of palliative care, gerontology and community nursing.

I commenced hospital-based nursing training in 1964, soon after my seventeenth birthday, completing in 1968. But the initial nursing training is only the beginning, and over the years I have developed qualifications and expertise in my chosen specialities through university-based study. A certificate in Therapeutic Massage is the most recent achievement.

Much of my nursing career has been spent in hospital and nursing home wards, and I moved to community nursing in 1996. I anticipate that I will continue to enjoy nursing in the community until I retire in about ten years.

### A BIT ABOUT YOU

I wonder what your life is like? I expect that many aspects of our lives would be parallel, and I hope that you are a sensitive, caring and fun-loving professional nurse. I imagine that you might have many more stressors in your life than I have in mine. I say this because even now, the rapidity of change is escalating at an almost alarming rate. I hope that you are able to keep abreast of modern trends without too much trouble.

Could I encourage you to continue to take a great deal of pride in being a nurse. Love what you do, and do what you love.

### CONCLUSION

Nursing is a profession for all seasons. Whatever you can do, or think you can do - begin it. For boldness has power and magic and greatness in it. (Pam retired in 2007, to go travelling/teaching in SouthEast Asia)