

**Report of a Committee appointed by the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland at the Annual Meeting in 1890 to formulate propositions as to the Care and Treatment of the Insane. This Report was adopted at the Annual Meeting in 1891**

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Report of a Committee appointed by the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland at the Annual Meeting in 1889 to inquire into the question of the systematic training of nurses and attendants on the insane. This Report was adopted at the Annual Meeting in 1890.

## MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE.

DR. HAYES NEWINGTON, *President*, and DR. CAMPBELL CLARK, CLOUSTON, BONVILLE FOX, MACLEOD, NORMAN, SAVAGE, SPENCE, STRAHAN, URQUHART, WHITCOMBE, YELLOWLEES.

The Committee reports that after full discussion, both by correspondence and by meeting, the members have arrived at a unanimous opinion on the questions referred to them.

The Committee was directed to consider and report on:—

1. The systematic training of nurses and attendants in asylums for the insane.
2. The keeping an efficient register of such nurses and attendants.
3. The granting of certificates of proficiency.

The wording of question (2) is somewhat ambiguous. It might mean that a register is to be kept of all attendants put into training; or it might mean that the register should only be for those who have been trained, and have obtained certificates. The Committee reads the question in the latter sense. While it will, of course, be essential to know where certificates have been bestowed, the keeping of a register for all attendants put into training would entail enormous and redundant labour on some official of the Association, and, further, such a proceeding is not necessary to the originating idea of advancing the proficiency of attendants. Question (2) will therefore be considered as a pendant to question (3).

The Committee's first duty was to ascertain whether, in the opinion of its members, it is advisable that the Association should institute a scheme for the training of nurses. There was no hesitation whatever in coming to the conclusion that the Committee should so advise the Association. It

was then necessary to settle the scope and details of such a scheme. There is here some room for diversity of opinion. The desire to fix the highest possible standard of efficiency has to be controlled by a due regard to practical considerations, and it has been found to be no easy matter to adjust these two elements, so that the training should, on the one hand, be more than mere routine, and yet, on the other, not be so exacting as to deter attendants from formally entering into it. Individual members of the Committee have, by their work, acquired some experience of such a system, and this experience entirely favours caution in procedure.

The Committee here wishes to state that in the recommendations made below it has sought to frame a scheme that should be possible to work under existing conditions. It trusts, however, and, indeed, thinks that this scheme, after it has been brought into action, and has been established by careful and patient fostering, may be considerably extended with advantage; and that, as a consequence, the possession of a certificate from the Association may eventually become a *sine qua non* for the holding of more responsible posts which are open to attendants, either in asylum or in domestic nursing of the insane.

The Committee have followed precedent in recommending that a considerable discretion should be left to individual superintendents in the choice of methods to be adopted in the acquirement of knowledge by attendants. But in such matters as the length of training and the attendance on formal lectures it appears to be only right that a definite minimum should be laid down. It also thinks that training should undoubtedly be confined to the requirements of those conditions of disease, both bodily and mental, which are ordinarily met with in asylum life, there being added thereto such instruction as will enable candidates to render "first aid," not only for accidents of ordinary life, but for the special accidents and intentional self-injuries that may arise in an asylum.

It prescribes also a period of probation, in order that a superintendent should have an opportunity of seeing whether an attendant has capacity for undergoing training with advantage. It by no means follows that an attendant, who is not considered to be likely to repay the trouble thus specially expended on him or her, should also be considered as unfit to be an attendant at all. The Committee wishes it to be clearly understood that such is not its view. There is plenty

of room for honest officials who will do such duty as is laid on them conscientiously and in strict compliance with orders, although intellectually they may not meet the requirements of a certifying body. The object of such a scheme as this, in the opinion of the Committee, should be to push improvement, where it is capable of being pushed, and thus to produce a higher standard. The common experience of all superintendents is that many of the most faithful and serviceable attendants would fail to adapt themselves to formal training. But, on the other hand, successful training should undoubtedly give an attendant advantage over the untrained in filling up the more responsible positions.

It should be added that in practice training would probably commence in most cases from the day of engagement, though it would not count till the three months had expired. The Committee also think that in the case of those attendants who have been already trained in the spirit, if not exactly in the letter of the regulations, provision should be made for their being allowed to offer themselves for examination *before* two years elapse *from the institution* of this scheme; in each case the consent of the Council should be obtained.

Before considering the next question of reference—the question whether the Association should be recommended to grant certificates or not—it was necessary to consider the matter of examinations. The Committee was readily convinced that these are desirable, not only as a preliminary to the granting of certificates, but also as a test of the success of training, even should the Association not elect to go as far as giving a certificate. It was felt that there should be definite consummation of training.

The times, places, and nature of the examination, as well as the appointment of the proper persons to conduct them, all raised questions, chiefly connected with the convenience of examiners and candidates. Uniformity, by which alone a definite value can be given to examinations, had to be arranged for, and required considerable adjustment of details. In considering these matters, the Committee were brought face to face with an element which pervades and affects this and subsequent parts of the scheme. It will be more conveniently referred to in a later paragraph, but it may here be stated that it was thought right to associate, for the purpose of conducting the examination, an assessor with the superintendent of the asylum whose candidates had to be examined. The presence of the latter would tend

to encourage candidates and to ensure that what knowledge they had was satisfactorily brought out; while the former would carry out the principle of the Association having a control of the examination, if it is to lead to the granting of certificates.

The question of prizes was duly considered, but it was found to be impracticable to centralize examination, and, therefore, impossible to so far collate the results as to justify any award on the part of the Association. The Committee, however, would encourage the granting of prizes by superintendents to the most successful of their own candidates, it being clearly understood that they were merely class honours.

Having thus disposed of the first question referred to it, the Committee turned to the subject of certificates. As stated above, a very serious question arose in the consideration of how far the Association is to commit itself by granting a certificate to an attendant. While it is evident that a certificate given by an individual superintendent without the direct participation of the Association would not rank any higher than an ordinary testimonial now does, it is equally apparent that the Association must not issue any document that can be misinterpreted, nor must it give the weight of its name to any document that can by any possibility be deemed to cover more ground than is intended. The mental attributes of a really good attendant can be divided into three groups:—*Morality*, including steadiness, sobriety, trustworthiness, etc.; *suitability*, including general aptitude, firmness of purpose, control of temper, courage, intelligent and patient application of knowledge to cases, and that indescribable element of compatibility with insane people which is necessary to make control at all acceptable to patients; and, lastly, *proficiency*, arising from experience and careful training. (Physical health, stature, etc., are clearly outside the requirements of this certificate.) The examination and certificate can only carry *future* weight in regard to "proficiency;" for it is a matter of frequent observation that after a time, and especially after prolonged care of trying cases, an attendant may lose his suitability in one way or another, while departure from morality is only too common, and may readily be fatal to any claim to fitness for attendance on the insane. It would be obviously wrong, therefore, to invite the Association to give any certificate that can be taken to bear testimony, after its issue, to any-

thing beyond the possession of a certain knowledge of the principles of nursing the insane. But, on the other hand, the Committee thinks that the Association is bound to protect itself, by requiring, at the time of examination, formal evidence of morality and suitability and recording this on the face of the certificate. The public should know that the Association has done its best to produce a person who is not only clever in his calling, but qualified, at the time of examination, in the other directions indicated, to execute those duties of trust and responsibility which mark the difference between nursing the sane and attending on the insane. One consideration must not be lost sight of. While an attendant is in asylum service he is under more or less efficient supervision, but when he leaves the asylum for private nursing, instead of being under control, he is too often master of the situation. Being freed from discipline, he is often tempted to take advantage of his position, and he not unfrequently falls to the temptation. In such a case the possession of the certificate by a person who has become unsuitable or morally unfit to hold it could not but be prejudicial both to the public as well as to the Association, and, indeed, fatal to the idea of certification, unless it were clearly set forth that character and suitability are not guaranteed after the date of issue.

A form of certificate has, therefore, been sketched by the Committee, in the hope that the risk of misuse will be minimized, without a too forcible suggestion of possible misconduct being made—a suggestion which would cause needless offence and seriously militate against its value to its possessor.

As to an efficient register, the Committee can only suggest at present that a mere list of successful candidates should be kept. It feels that until the scheme is thoroughly well established it will be impossible to provide for a register that shall be efficient in the proper sense—the certain expurgation of the names of those who shall forfeit by misconduct their claim to be recognized as worthy attendants. As will be seen by the formal recommendations appended, the Committee are prepared to advise the erasure, by order of the Council, of such names after due inquiry into the circumstances, and they advise that the register shall be published annually in the Journal, together with the names erased (if any). In asylum service, misconduct would be almost certainly followed by report and erasure, but in private

nursing it would be very different, it is feared. Further, mere erasure of the name would not suffice, unless the certificate itself could be recovered by the Association. It is believed that if the certificate is unreservedly made over to a successful candidate there is no sort of legal compulsion to make him return it against his will. The Committee has therefore devised a plan by which the Association can possibly, though not certainly, regain and annul the certificate of a holder who misconducts himself. But when the system has grown and can stand the strain of more stringent regulations, no doubt some further plan can be devised by which a certificate would have, in order to continue its value, to be returned at stated times to the officers of the Association to be reattested on satisfactory evidence of continued good conduct, and thus each certificate and its holder could be followed. Such an operation, however, would require the appointment of a Registrar as a separate officer of the Association; and the Committee, in view of the difficulties, would not now go beyond the limits defined above. It is hoped that every member of the Association would endeavour to extend the usefulness of this list by ascertaining if a candidate for employment, whether in asylum or private work, was still kept on the register; and also by at once reporting any misconduct to the Secretary.

The Committee fully discussed the propriety of charging candidates a small fee to cover the expenses of examination and certificate. It decided that it would not be wise to do so now, though perhaps, if a satisfactory plan is worked out for keeping a really efficient register (as defined above), candidates might be expected to contribute to the expenses involved, in return for the obvious benefit they would receive from unworthy attendants being kept off the register.

Recommendations of the Committee:—

#### TRAINING.

1. That a system of training of attendants in asylums be instituted by the Association on the following lines—
  - a. A period of three months' probation be required before the attendant is considered to have formally entered training.
  - b. A period of two years' training and service in the asylum (including the period of probation) to be required before an attendant is allowed to become a candidate for examination.

c. System of training to be by:—

*Study* of text-books—the Committee recommending the Handbook for Attendants prepared by a sub-committee of the Association in the year 1885. Other books at the direction of each individual Superintendent.

*Exercises*, under head and ward attendants, to be arranged at the discretion of the Superintendent.

*Clinical instruction* in the wards by the medical staff.

*Lectures or demonstrations* (other than ward instruction) given by the medical staff, at least 12 of which shall be attended by each attendant during his two years of training.

*Periodical examination* to test progress left to the discretion of the Superintendent.

d. Scope of training should be limited to the ordinary requirements of nursing of, and attendance on, insane patients, combined with instruction in the general features of mental disease, together with general ideas of bodily structure and function, sufficient to enable nurses under training to understand such instruction and to qualify them to render "first aid," especially in the case of accident or injury that may arise specially in Asylums. Anything beyond this is considered to be outside the scope of the present inquiry.

#### EXAMINATIONS.

2. That examinations for the purpose of granting certificates of proficiency to successful candidates be instituted by the Association under the following conditions—

- a. Examinations to be held twice yearly—on the first Monday in May and the first Monday in November.
- b. Examination to be held at individual asylums, wherever there may be candidates.
- c. Examinations to be partly by papers and partly *vivâ voce*.
- d. The papers to be set by the Examiners of the Association (appointed from time to time for examining medical candidates for the diploma of the Association). The examiners, when setting the papers, to fix marks to each question, and to fix the minimum total required for a pass. The Council to frame regulations to prevent the contents of the papers being divulged before the proper time.



- e. The examinations to be conducted as follows:—The papers to be answered on the days fixed, under the supervision of the Superintendent, and to be examined and valued by the Superintendent, and an Assessor. The practical part to be conducted by the Superintendent and the Assessor on as early a day after the fixed day as can be conveniently arranged by the Superintendent and Assessor.
- f. The Assessor to be the Superintendent of a neighbouring asylum, the consent of the Council of the Association to his acting as such having been obtained.
- g. The candidate to obtain a certificate of morality and suitability from his or her Superintendent before being admitted to the examination, and this certificate shall be sent by the Superintendent and Assessor to the Secretaries when application is made to them for the form of certificate to be given to the candidate.
- h. Attendants who at this time, or at any time before two years after the institution of this scheme, shall have, in the opinion of their Superintendents, been afforded and have availed themselves of opportunities of training to an extent contemplated under the first recommendation, even if it be not exactly in conformity with the prescribed regulations, shall be allowed to present themselves for examination if the Council of the Association approves.

#### CERTIFICATES.

3. That certificates of proficiency be granted under the following conditions —

- a. The certificate to be in the form appended.
- b. The certificates to bear consecutive numbers, to bear the seal of the Association, and to be issued and countersigned by the Secretaries of the Association for the division of the kingdom where they are granted.
- c. The certificates to be granted and signed by the examining Superintendent and his Assessor.
- d. The Superintendent to send to the General Secretary a list of successful candidates after each examination.

## REGISTER.

4. That a Register of Candidates who have passed the examination be kept by the General Secretary of the Association.

5. That in case of misconduct on the part of a holder of a certificate, a Superintendent (or, in private nursing, the medical man in charge or the employer) should be requested, by a note on the back of the certificate, to at once transmit a report of the circumstances to the General Secretary, who will lay the same before the Council for consideration. The Council will, if it thinks fit to do so, direct the Secretary to erase the name of the delinquent from the Register.

6. That each candidate, before receiving the parchment certificate, shall sign the appended agreement.

7. That Superintendents and other members of the Association on engaging attendants who profess to be on the Register should satisfy themselves that such is the case, by inquiring of the Secretary.

8. That the Register be published annually in the Journal, together with the names (if any) that have been erased by direction of the Council.

## FORM OF CERTIFICATE.

(ON FACE.)

This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_ has, after examination by us, shown to our satisfaction that (he or she) has attained proficiency in nursing and attendance on insane persons. Before this certificate is granted, it has been testified to us by \_\_\_\_\_, under whom (he or she) has been trained for two years, that \_\_\_\_\_'s character, conduct and aptitude have been such as to entitle (him or her) to be admitted to examination for this certificate.

Signed, \_\_\_\_\_

Countersigned, \_\_\_\_\_

Examiners.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Hon. Sec. for

No. \_\_\_\_\_

Seal of the Association.

[SEE BACK.]



(ON BACK).

This certificate refers only to proficiency. Testimonials of personal character hereafter would be required. It is requested that this certificate should be retained during the engagement by the employer, and that in case of dissatisfaction communication should at once be made to the Hon. Secretary of the Medico-Psychological Association.

*Paper to be signed by a successful Candidate before receiving the Parchment Certificate.*

I agree to the provisions that my certificate should be retained by my employer during the time of my service under him, and that the certificate shall be forfeited if my conduct should be proved in the opinion of the Council of the Medico-Psychological Association to render me unworthy to continue to hold it.

Signed, \_\_\_\_\_

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