

The Present Status and Issues of the Nurse Bank Service Provided by Nursing Associations

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We considered the following points on the basis of the May 1980 survey on the implementation of nurse bank service and the nurse bank conference held in December of the same year.

Nurse bank service is a general term for the various services (i.e., conducting surveys, drawing up lists of names, educating, engaging in public relations, providing consultations and guidance, etc.) that are designed to promote the employment of public health nurses, midwives, trained nurses and auxiliary nurses, who are unemployed at present. This state-supported service has been implemented by local governments, but the local government may give part of it in charge to competent organizations engaged in providing nursing care. In recent years, this service has been increasingly charged to these organization; in fact, as of 1980, 35 out of 47 local governments entrusted it to nursing organizations. In 17 of these cases, the nursing organizations involved were licensed to act as free employment agencies, in addition to nurse bank service.

The Ministry of Health and Welfare first proposed this program in 1974 as part of its policy to alleviate the serious shortage of nurses (the unbalance of supply and demand) that had become a social problem around that time. But as a result of the gradual decline in the rate of increase in the number of medical facilities and hospital beds, coupled with a gradual increase in the [number of nurse trainees, the supply and demand of nurse is now balanced, although large regional differences still exist. Furthermore, since the government is now trying to adjust state subsidies as part of its tight financial policy, the subsidy for nurse bank service could be terminated at any time.

While the main concerns of the state and local governments are the extent of the shortage of nurses in each prefecture and the effectiveness of nurse banks in alleviating it, the nurse bank service has a greater significance for the nursing organization performing it. The nurse bank service provides employment opportunities for unemployed members of the nursing profession and helps improve their working conditions. The service also helps improve the social standing of nursing organizations, thus contributing toward recruiting members. Furthermore, some nursing organizations are thinking of assigning their nurse bank personnel to community nursing care, which is now suffering from personnel shortage.

But under present conditions, few nursing organizations are performing their nurse bank

service without the government subsidy. We must therefore persuade to continue its subsidy for the government by changing the main objective of nurse bank service from that of providing nurses to hospitals and clinics to that of providing nurses for community nursing care. This is particularly necessary for the government to make a success of government's health care program for the elderly.

Furthermore, it is important that nursing organizations clarify the outlook for their entire activities, in which they clearly define their programs for maintaining and expanding their functions (including that of ensuring a revenue source) above and beyond what the state and local governments expect from them.

(The results of the May 1980 survey and the December conference are appended.)

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