
PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING IN CHARLOTTE AND MECKLENBURG COUNTY Circa 1932

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According to all available information, Miss Josephine Carhart, the first public health nurse in Charlotte was financed by the sale of Tuberculosis Christmas Seals. And the earliest date recorded in connection with her work is February, 1913. The first full time Health Officer, Dr. C.C. Hudson now of Greensboro, North Carolina, began work in October 1917. At that time there were two nurses doing public health nursing in Charlotte; one for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and one for the Young Men's Benevolent Society of the Second Presbyterian Church. The work of the Tuberculosis nurse had been discontinued previous to this date.

Later in the fall of 1917 Camp Green was completed, and Major Brown, who represented the United States Public Health Service for the Cantonment Zone, and Dr. Hudson, in discussing the Health work in Charlotte and vicinity, recognized the need for well-trained public health nurses and applied for a Red Cross Unit. Four staff nurses and a supervisor were sent to Charlotte. And since Dr. Hudson was interested in all health work in the community he persuaded the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and the Young Men's Benevolent Society to give their nurses the benefit of supervision. During the Influenza Epidemic additional nurses were supplied by the Red Cross and the community had a very effective demonstration of good public health nursing. In the fall of 1918 a colored nurse was employed jointly by the Red Cross and the Colored Chamber of Commerce; and the Chadwick-Hoskins Mills employed a nurse to work with the group.

When the time arrived for the withdrawal of the Red Cross Unit, Dr. Hudson and the Supervising Nurse visited all the interested agencies and proposed the organization of a cooperative nursing association. The Public Welfare Department of the Woman's Club responded promptly and took the lead in stimulating general community interest. This department was responsible for the sale of Christmas Seals and they used a fund which was on hand for the employment of a tuberculosis nurse. Several of the prominent club women were present at the organization meeting in March, 1919 and the first president of the Charlotte Cooperative Nursing Association also held office in the club. At this meeting the Young Men's Benevolent Society accepted the responsibility of raising a fund for the employment of an infant welfare nurse. Through the Health Officer's effort the city commissioners were prevailed upon to pay the salary of the Supervising Nurse, Miss Elizabeth G. Reynolds, and to supply a nurse for the Venereal Disease Clinic; A nurse was provided by the School Board; and one employed by the Highland Park Mills which brought the total staff to twelve nurses. This group working under one supervisor carried a program including Industrial nursing, Tuberculosis work, Venereal Disease Clinic Service, Infant Welfare and School Nursing. And the Board of Directors was composed of representatives from the Health Department, the School Board, the leading mill companies, the Red Cross Chapter, Woman's Club, the Good Fellow's Club, the Parent-Teacher Association, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, the Western Union Telegraph Company, Associated Charities, and the Medical Association.

In January 1922 a County Health Department was organized in affiliation with the City Health Department and a nurse was employed to do School health work. In June of the same year a second nurse was added and the county program was enlarged to include Tuberculosis nursing and immunization.

A Maternity and Infancy nurse was appointed in 1927. She was carried on a program of Midwife Supervision and is advisory nurse to the City and County Staff. In 1928 a colored school nurse was added to the county unit.

In these intervening years the City School Nursing Staff has grown from one to six and one of these was appointed at the request of the Director of Nursing to supervise this group.

The duties of quarantine officer was delegated to a nurse in 1931.

At the present time there are four nurses in the county unit. The City unit includes a Director of Nursing, a Supervisor and five school nurses, one tuberculosis, one venereal disease, one communicable disease, and eight general district nurses.