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NEWS

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*****Human research meeting

DALLAS--In order for nurses involved in human research to come to agreement about the tough ethical problems they face daily, they must first clarify their own personal value systems, says Randee Silverman, R.N., head of the nursing in-service education department at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia, Pa.

Silverman, former head nurse for the hospital's federally-funded Pediatric Clinical Research Center, will be addressing a meeting of the National Association of Research Nurses and Dietitians in Dallas at the Sheraton Hotel June 12-14 on "Bioethical Considerations in Research Involving Human Subjects."

Nursing groups have been grappling with setting codes of ethical standards since 1893 when a committee of nurses wrote the Florence Nightingale Code. This standard has implications for today's specially-trained research professional when it states in part that "I will abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous and will not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug." Today there is also a widely accepted Nurses' Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for nursing, accepted by the American Medical Association, which also has standards for about half a dozen nursing sub-specialties. And in 1953 an international code of nursing ethics was formulated, which declares that "The nurse is under an obligation to carry out the physician's orders intelligently and loyally and to refuse to participate in unethical procedures."

Modern scientific and medical developments have created a whole new maze of ethical problems, says Silverman, particularly in regards to resuscitating or "bringing back" the terminally ill patient in the intensive care unit. Also, with the spotlighting by the media of abuses in human research in the past, ethical questions have become increasingly important to professionals.

Silverman, who ran value-clarification programs when she was head nurse at St. Christopher's clinical research unit, is now preparing an ethics course for neonatal intensive care nurses at the hospital.

Because the St. Christopher CRC is for pediatric research, she has developed a special interest in the ethical considerations in human research on children. Some of these are what rights do children have in these circumstances, can they understand enough about their conditions and the possible hazards of treatment to give consent for themselves, do parents have the right to give consent for research procedures for their children and what about comatose or semi-conscious patients?

Her presentation will include cases from her own experience, as well as from a review of the literature in medical ethics.

"I feel it's important for nurses to deal with their values, so we will be raising questions and bringing issues out in open discussion. But I don't want anyone to feel I have the answers," she says.

first-add nurses

Other topics on the opening-day program will include "The Initiation and Progression of a Research Project: The Fundamentals of Organizing, Developing and Instituting a Research Project," M. Carolyn Borne, R.N., Childrens Hospital of Los Angeles; "Nursing Implications of Maple Syrup Urine Disease," Silverman; "Zinc Deficiency and Effect of Zinc Supplementation in Patients with Chronic Renal Disease," Joane Eggert, R.D., University of Utah; "Implementation of a Nutritional Assessment Program for Patient Care and Nutrition Research," Terri G. Jensen, R.D., The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston; and "Variability of Research Diets," Louise Hendricksen, R.D., U.S.D.A., and Janet Mahalko, Human Nutrition Laboratory, Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Friday's program will open with an update on diabetes including new treatments, diets, equipment such as insulin pumps, sugar substitutes, laboratory tests and hints for patient education by a panel of Dallas research nurses. Joanne Keller, R.N., psychiatric nurse at the Dallas health science center will give a presentation on "Biochemical Abnormalities in Affective Disorders," which will deal with such mental problems as depression and schizophrenia, and Silverman and Sharon Scaltrito, R.N., head nurse from the University of New Mexico Hospital at Albuquerque, will speak on "Primary Nursing in a Research Setting."

The Dietitians will hear Betty Darnell, R.D., from the University of Alabama on a new high myoinositol diet which has been developed for the treatment of diabetic retinopathy. Ellis Stumbo, R.D., from Iowa City, Iowa will speak on "Urinary Nitrogen as Related to Protein in Pregnant Women," and Peter L. Beyer, R.D., from the Kansas University Medical Center, Kansas City, will give an address on "Nutritional and Therapeutic Role of Fiber: Fact or Fiction."

The program for Friday afternoon will feature "The Effect in Winstrol and Calcitonin on Osteoporotic Post Menopausal Women," Elaine Hartsook, R.D., The University of Washington Hospital, Seattle, and a "film festival" of movies and videotapes about clinical research centers and their work.

The nursing program will feature "Plasmapheresis as a Research and Treatment Tool," Lisa Near, R.N., The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas; "The Importance of the Nursing Role in Assessing the Nutritional Status of Infants," Betsy Cohen-Tietell, R.N., Children's Medical Center, Dallas; and "Phase I (Highly Experimental) Studies in Oncology," Marilyn Davis, R.N., medical oncology nurse, The University of New Mexico Hospital. Also Barbara Elick, R.N., from UTHSCD will speak on "Nursing Implications in Pancreatic Transplants." There will also be a share session on the similarities of common goals and problems of research nurses who work in Clinical Research Centers and those who work in other settings.

Dr. William DeCesare, chief, GCRC Branch, Division of Research Resources, National Institutes of Health, will give an update of the GCRC program, and a panel of nurses will speak on developing an orientation program for new staff in a research center.

The keynote address, "A Challenge for the Eighties--The Future of Health Care Delivery Systems," will be delivered Saturday morning. Speaker will be Dr. Barbara Fuszard, R.N., a clinical associate professor at Kent State.

Coordinators for the program are Linda Brinkley, R.D., and Judith Townsend, R.N. Continuing Education coordinator is Carol Poindexter, R.N. All are from the GCRC unit at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas.

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