

news THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT DALLAS

southwestern medical school ■ graduate school of biomedical sciences ■ school of allied health sciences

Contact: Ann Harrell

DALLAS--Janet Marvin, R.N., is a young woman with a mission.

A 10-year veteran of work with patients in critical condition in the Parkland Hospital Burn Center, Nurse Marvin is dedicated to improvements in the method of care that these patients receive.

"People generally don't realize how common the experience of having a friend or family member critically burned really is," she said. "But thermal injury is the leading cause of death in the pediatric age group (1 to 11 years of age) today in the United States. It also ranks third among the causes of death in trauma patients below the age of 45, and it's a common disease in the elderly. The Burn Center in Parkland alone sees approximately 450 adults and children a year with 20 per cent or more of their bodies badly burned.

Ms. Marvin's current appointment as instructor in surgical nursing at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School enables her to be in the front lines in the battle for increased patient survival at all times.

It was her close working relationship with Dr. Charles Baxter, professor of surgery at UT Southwestern and director of the Burn Center, that led to her faculty position and to the founding of a co-operative degree program in conjunction with Texas Woman's University in medical/surgical nursing with a specialty in burns. It includes patient care, administration and research.

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first add marvin

The teaching program, which is set up for two years work for a master's degree, currently has three nurses enrolled. The master's level work can also be applied to a Ph.D. degree in the same areas. At the present time HEW is helping finance the training. A contract for \$306,514 to train these specialty care nurses has just been awarded to the medical school and Texas Woman's University by Health, Education and Welfare Division of Nursing.

Dr. Baxter heads the program as director. Janet and Dr. P. Wm. Curreri are assistant directors. Fourth member of the teaching team is Cornelia Kenner, R.N. and T.W.U. faculty member. Nurse Kenner has just completed her master's degree at T.W.U. and is currently an instructor on the T.W.U. graduate school faculty.

A nursing graduate of T.W.U. herself, Ms. Marvin holds a master's degree in pediatric nursing from the University of Washington. It was through her work with pediatric burn cases as head nurse in the Parkland Burn Unit that she became first committed to burn work.

The three students in the graduate program are also all experienced nurses who want to continue working professionally in burn care. Carol Buchanan, who is from Dallas, has worked as head nurse for several years at the Shrine Burn unit. She will complete her master's degree in January and begin work on her Ph.D.

Mariam Kojis, who is originally from Fort Worth, has worked with pediatric burns at Parkland.

Mary Dempsey, who is from the Houston area, returned to the program this fall after a summer stint of nursing in Houston to supplement her \$250 a month graduate stipend. She has also served as a nurse at the Army Institute of Surgical Research Burn Unit for two years.

Is there a need for this kind of program?

"We're already getting two or three letters a month from physicians and hospitals wanting to know when our graduates will be available. Places for four additional students will open in January in order to fill some of these positions when possible.

There are other medical/surgical programs. What makes this one so outstanding?

third add marvin

And, he hastened to explain, we are not trying to train the nurses to compete with the physicians in research. We are trying to train them to be of assistance in determining the best care possible for the patient by doing related research and/or assisting the physician-researcher.

It is this emphasis on research that makes this master's program a two-year course, Ms. Marvin said. Unfortunately, these nurses have not had strong enough backgrounds in the sciences to prepare them for research in physiology, pharmacology, anatomy and the other disciplines they may be utilizing in their research.

This is where the beauty of the cooperative program between Southwestern and T.W.U. comes in. They attend the science courses they need at the medical school and their nursing courses at the T.W.U. Center, also on the Medical Center campus.

A first-year student would find herself with patients in the mornings, including rounds on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 7:30 to 11 a.m. ("A great deal of the actual teaching goes on during rounds," she stressed.) Afternoons, the student attends classes.

She also attends two research conferences and one general ward conference a week. Observing in surgery also takes up a great deal of her time.

In the second year, she continued, the curriculum is similar but a great deal of time is spent on research and in research-related conferences with the doctors. And most find it financial necessity to work at least one shift a week.

Dr. Baxter hopes to raise \$50 extra a month to add to the nurses' \$250 per month stipends.

"The young women who have entered our program are to be commended," she said. Not only do they have had to give up two work-productive years for training, living on a small stipend during that time, they have to be prepared to pull up stakes and move where they're needed to implement an outstanding program as new burn centers are established." This is ultimately our goal--to send top-flight supervisory personnel, research trained, to raise the general level of burn care in this country.

Fourth add marvin

What about Ms. Marvin?

If she believes in the program so much, why isn't she participating in it herself?

She smiled.

"I do have some ongoing projects related to the wound-biopsy culture technique that we use (culturing for early infection in the wound by taking a biopsy)." I had planned to get started on my research leading to a Ph.D.--probably in physiology--this fall.

"But if we get our four new students, I'll have to postpone it a while. There'll be too much to do!"

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