

# Nursing

## Mixes heart and head to make the top grade

By Joanne Mallazewski staff writer

Whether it was job burn-out or relocation, nursing once was a high turnover profession which often led to a shortage of nurses. Today, with a tight economy and increasingly larger graduating classes, nursing jobs are harder to come by.

"Because of the economy, fewer nurses are quitting or moving out," said Anne Hane, Farmington's Botsford Hospital's nursing recruiter.

But that trend is hardly daunting nursing students now attending Livonia's Schoolcraft College and Mercy College of Detroit.

Both schools send a portion of their nursing students to Botsford on a semester basis to train and practice nursing and medical skills one or two days a week.

As in all other training hospitals, Botsford allows students to practice the skills they've acquired in college classes and labs, as well give them an opportunity to work directly with patients.

Besides the educational benefit of training in a hospital, the hands-on experience provides students with the skills and practical work experience that in the long run helps the graduate nurse nab the job she wants.

"It's a good experience," said Elaine Lester, one of Mercy's clinical instructors at Botsford. "The students feel much more competent and confident."

EVEN THOUGH both schools' students acquire similar skills and preparation to pass the state licensing exam, which qualifies each graduate as a registered nurse (RN), the Schoolcraft and Mercy nursing programs approach student training differently.

Schoolcraft, for example, offers a two-year associate's degree and tends to highlight technical nursing and medical skills. Mercy, on the other hand, offers a four-year bachelor's degree and accommodates both technical skills as well as leadership and management education.

But that major difference makes little difference in the salary a graduate nurse will receive when she finds a job, said Nadine Fulong, executive director of the Michigan Nurses Association in Lansing.

"It's not an ideal situation," she said, "why that exists, though, is because it's nursing history."

Nonetheless, Furlong said, graduates from both types of programs are qualified as RNs and learn basically the same nursing and medical skills. But a four-year degree program prepares a student for administrative and management nursing positions, as well as opening a door to advanced training and education.

DESPITE THE differences in the programs, both Mercy and Schoolcraft nursing students are required to complete clinical training programs in various medical fields, such as obstetrics, medical surgery, and psychiatric care.

That's what both Schoolcraft and Mercy students are doing at Botsford.

Mercy nursing students wait until their second year to begin work in a hospital, while Schoolcraft students jump right in during their first year.

The Mercy students begin the one-day-a-week training at 8 a.m. with a preclinical conference, discussing the patients and the illnesses they will encounter during the day.

UNLIKE THE MERCY students, those attending Schoolcraft train at Botsford two days a week, rotating between two separate medical units.

"For better experience they switch floors," said Eileen Bolcer one of Schoolcraft's nursing instructors at Botsford. "That way we have a good variety of patients."

Schoolcraft students are assigned, on a permanent semester basis, to a particular staff nurse in their assigned medical unit. The student then works directly with the nurse and the patients under her care.

"The nursing staff has a list of all clinical competencies for each student," Bolcer said. "The students may do only what they've studied and trained for in the classroom."

"This is actually on-the-job training," Bolcer added.

The same restrictions apply to Mercy students, who must first demonstrate competency in required skills acquired in classes and labs.

"We do not put them in situations that are beyond their skills," Lester said. "That's actually what I'm here for — to keep an eye on safety."

In both schools' programs, the emphasis is on combining theoretical knowledge with practical skills.

"They must bring all of these things into their critical judgment," Lester



Stephanie Capodilupo (left) a student at Mercy College helps Jack Robinson get use to his crutches after surgery while instructor Elaine Lester lends a hand.

said. "Each patient is different, so the students have to make a lot of individual assessments."

Both schools' nursing students also begin their training with the same level of simple nursing and medical skills, such as turning over immobile patients, making beds and taking vital signs. That means learning how to read temperatures, blood pressure, pulse and respiration.

As training becomes more extensive, the students graduate to giving injections, setting up intravenous bottles, and giving medication.

"An instructor is with them for all medications," Bolcer said. "So, it's safe."

Both Lester and Bolcer agree, however, that patients should be just as trusting of student nurses as they are of staff nurses. Although inexperienced at the job, the students are thoroughly trained before working with patients.

In fact, the instructors maintain that patients often request a student nurse.

"The patients for the most part are very supportive," Lester said. "They are very interested in having students care for them."



Learning to establish a rapport with the patients is part of the training that Schoolcraft student Debbie Breeding will encounter at Botsford Hospital.

## Personal stories abound behind new stethoscopes

By Joanne Mallazewski staff writer

Next time your temper flares with the nurse attending your hospital sickbed, think again. As a nurse, she's undergone rigorous and expensive training to help you through your illness or injury.

And if Schoolcraft and Mercy college nursing student are any indication, their chosen profession probably is one of the most exciting and challenging experiences of their lives.

"I've always wanted to be a nurse," said Darlene Brobst, 24, of Livonia, a Schoolcraft College student training at Farmington Hills' Botsford Hospital. "It's always been my eventual goal."

MANY OF the Mercy and Schoolcraft nursing students in training at Botsford say their decision to enter nursing was simply a passion for medicine and caring for people. The job market in nursing also seems to have been an incentive.

And it seems the students' intuition is on target: Between now and 1990, 3,310 new nursing positions will be available annually statewide, says Michigan Employment Security Commission officials. The salaries that accompany those jobs differ between hospitals, specialties and shifts. But at Botsford, for example, a general practice nurse earns more than \$9 per hour.

"The job market is really fantastic," said Rae Dumouchel of Muskegon, a Mercy College nursing student. She is considering becoming a research nurse when she graduates in two years.

But between now and graduation, Schoolcraft and Mercy students have a lot of knowledge and experience to acquire.

THAT'S WHY, despite the inviting job market, many student nurses work part-time on weekends as nursing assistants in other hospitals. In addition to the skills they can acquire, the students have an opportunity to catch-up job experience in the specialized area they may go into after graduation.

"Actually, you really can't learn about anything until it happens," said Kelly Johnston of Brighton, a Mercy College student. Johnston works part-time as a nursing assistant in a hospital emergency room.

Almost certain she'll specialize as an emergency room nurse, Johnston said a trauma center is the place "where you can deal with every kind of patient."

"As soon as something horrible comes in, the first person they grab is the student," Johnston said, adding she's already helped doctors treat accident victims.

THE EXPERIENCE is invaluable, Johnston said, because "book learning and actual doing sometimes are very different things."

Because most hospitals first hire the most experienced nurses, getting into a hospital after graduation concerns most nursing students.

"So we try to learn as much as we can now," Johnston added.

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Students gather in the morning to discuss each patient's case that they will be handling during the shift.

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