

April 1960
Published in
"Practical Nursing"
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HOME NURSING IN THE 50th STATE

Hawaii--the land of swaying palm trees, sunshine and fresh tropical fruit--could this paradise located in the center of the great Pacific ever have any illnesses? This was the question I asked myself when I first saw the islands in August of 1959. I soon learned that this most beautiful island with an ideal climate could not eliminate illness and the need for practical nurses.

Although I am still a "malahini" or newcomer to this island, I am learning about the people, customs, and traditions that are so different from the typical United States scene. One of my responsibilities with the Practical Nursing Department of the Kapiolani Technical School is to supervise the students during their home nursing experience. This position has given me the golden opportunity to meet the island people, learn of their food specialities, customs and traditions. Perhaps we can share some of my experiences in these Hawaiian Homes.

One of my students was assigned to care for a newborn baby of a Chinese-American family living on top of one of the old volcanic mountains. The steep drive up Pacific Heights Road was winding, but so lovely as we overlooked Honolulu, the Pacific Ocean and other mountains. This was my first home visit since the preceding supervisor had placed the student in the home. Being a little anxious as I approached the family, I wondered if the parents would speak English or have unusual customs. Curiously, I noticed that there were several pairs of shoes and slippers lined up outside of the front door. Not to be outdone by the barefeet I expected to find inside, I removed my shoes and entered the home where I was offered a pair of slippers as is the custom in Chinese homes. In broken English they

offered me a cup of tea, which I later found to be typical of the gracious and hospital^{le} Oriental people. I was then taken to the baby's room. The student was busy preparing items for the baby's bath, and explained that she had made the formula for the day, washed the diapers and was now preparing for the bath. The mother left the room and we proceeded to discuss this newborn infant and postpartum case. It appeared that some of the old Chinese customs had been passed on through the generations, and although not found in modern textbooks, were still in use here. According to her ancestral tradition, this new mother ~~was~~ takes a daily bath in special herbs and enjoys a special chicken soup brewed with other chinese herbs prepared daily by "Auntie" or some relative. Following delivery the mother is not allowed out of the home for one month and is encouraged to stay out of the sun in order to rest and relax. However, the infant care was similar to that which is common for any normal infant. After our discussion of the baby and mother care, I observed the student give the bath and dress the baby. Upon leaving, the family gave me some beautiful white orchid blossoms which were plentiful in their garden.

The next case took me to a suburban section of the city where I met a Hawaiian family named Kuhio. Mrs. Kuhio was busy and shouted, "Come in, my mother is on the lanai, and as soon as I'm all pau with these pukas, I'll be with you." Utterly confused and at complete loss as to what Mrs. Kuhio had said, I approached her and asked her to repeat. She smiled and said, "You are a new haole (Caucasian) from the mainland." She then explained that her mother was on the porch (lanai) and that she was almost finished (pau) mending the holes (pukas) in the clothing.

Mrs. Kahalehili, the mother of this Hawaiian lady, had suffered a recent stroke and was recovering from her paralysis and speech difficulties. She was eating an early lunch of poi, ground pork, papaya and coconut pudding.

I was especially interested in the poi. It is a vegetable much like our potato which is cooked, mashed, served with most meals and is often the first solid food offered in infancy. The color of poi is grayish lavender and, in early Hawaiian times, this food was eaten with the fingers. Mrs. Kahalehili was enjoying every bite of her typically Hawaiian meal with Miss Chung, the student, was feeding her.

This student had rearranged the room to better care for Mrs. Kahalehili and had made a foot board, sand bags, pressure ring and doughnuts for comfort and support. After a brief discussion of Mrs. Kahalehili's nursing care and rehabilitation, another home visit appointment was made to supervise the exercises that were ordered on all extremities.

Leaving the bungalow in suburban Kaimuki, I traveled along the freeway thinking of the many families and races I would meet in Hawaii. Among them would be people of Japanese, Chinese, Puerto Rican, Samoan, Hawaiian, Filipino, and European ancestry. These varied Oriental races outnumber the Caucasians, but an increase in "mainlanders" has been noticed since Hawaii is now a state. Yes, we are a state, meaning the major islands of Hawaii, Maui, Molokai, Kauai, and Oahu, which make up the State of Hawaii.

Continuing to drive along the new highway to Honolulu, I looked about the countryside on this warm winter day. The poinsettias were in full bloom with the branches reaching out to the top of a home. The deep purple of bougainvillea bushes enhanced the gardens as did the bird of paradise flower, hibiscus and several varieties of orchids.