

PRACTICAL NURSING IN HAWAII

By Marjorie Elliott, B.S., R.N.

The Territory of Hawaii consists of a small group of islands nestled in the Pacific Ocean some 2,100 miles from San Francisco. The major islands in the group are Hawaii, Maui, Kauai, and Oahu where the largest city, Honolulu, is situated.

In this island-paradise, nursing needs differ only slightly from those of the mainland United States. Perhaps the greatest difference lies in the fairly adequate supply of nurses on all levels, in comparison with the nurse shortage on the mainland.

Following the second world war, the realization that well-trained practical nurses would be invaluable in the nursing field resulted in the establishment of the Practical Nursing School, in 1947, in Honolulu to train students from all the islands. Three classes each year have been trained, graduated, and licensed, after passing the National Test Pool examination.

The alumnae group now consists of 495 nurses, most of whom are employed in hospitals on the various islands. A smaller number enter the private-duty field or assist in doctors' offices.

Since the Territory's population of

Mrs. Elliott, Director of the Hawaii School of Practical Nursing since the organization began in 1947, received her B.S. from Hastings College, Hastings, Nebraska, and her R.N. from Johns Hopkins Hospital School of Nursing. She is a member of the Territorial Board for the Licensing of Nurses.



Two graduate practical nurses assist an elderly Japanese patient in the walker.

about 500,000 is made up of many races and racial mixtures, it follows that classes in the Practical Nursing School will be representative of these groups. Although there are some haole (Caucasian) students, they are far outnumbered by those of Japanese, Filipino, Chinese, Portuguese, Samoan, Korean, Puerto Rican, and Hawaiian ancestry. These students are all definitely American, but their racial characteristics and customs greatly increase the interest and stimulation of class discussions and activities.

Perfect racial equality does not exist even here, but Hawaii probably



Clinical instructor stands by as student practical nurse brings twin babies to mother.

comes as close to such a utopia as any place in the world. The students here are shocked to read of mainland schools where white and colored students are trained separately. Even the private schools here are open to all races.

The Practical Nursing School functions under the Vocational Division of the Department of Public Instruction, with two full-time and two part-time instructors.

The curriculum corresponds in general with that recommended by the National Association for Practical

Nurse Education. At present the training is 10 months in length. There is a three-month period of theory followed by seven months of clinical experience in various hospitals, enabling students to become familiar with obstetrical, pediatric, medical, surgical, and tuberculosis nursing. Each student also has 3 weeks of home nursing and participates for 3 weeks in Day Care Centers, with well children.

Since men are much needed in the practical nursing field, as many as

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can meet the entrance requirements are accepted into the school. Fourteen men have completed the course and two are in training at present.

Evening extension courses for practical nurses licensed by waiver have been conducted in the home school and have been sponsored by the School on two of the other islands. Not only do these courses improve the quality of nursing care in the Territory, but those who graduate become eligible to sit for the regular licensure examination.

Licensed practical nurses in the Territory have organized County Associations on the four largest islands, which together make up the Territorial Association. The yearly convention of this group was highlighted this year by visiting officials from the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses with whom the Territorial group is affiliated.

With the help of many interested persons and organizations, an appropriation was secured from the Territorial legislature in 1955 for \$100,000 to build a Practical Nursing School. At its completion the latter part of this year, the School will, for the first time, have permanent housing with adequate space. The course will then be lengthened to one year and the teaching staff increased to three full-time instructors, in addition to the part-time services of a home economics teacher.

Although the course has been only 10 months in length, the graduates of the school have ranked well above the average of all those taking the National Test Pool examinations.

With the extension of the course to a year, and a new building, the school expects soon to be able to meet the NAPNE requirements for national accreditation.