

## **HOME HEALTH & HOSPICE NURSES THROUGH THE YEARS**

**BY: Melissa Jeremiah, RN, CHCE**

**Director of Operations Hoosier Uplands Home Health and Hospice**

**Home Health Care & Hospice has come along away since 1893 when Lillian D. Wald founded the 1<sup>st</sup> Home Health Care & Hospice Agency in the U.S.; Visiting Nurse Service of New York/VNSNY. When she founded VNSNY she did so to ensure the poor and disabled could receive the same care in their homes; as their wealthy counterparts.**

**During the past 126 years nursing has developed into a profession. A job description from 1887 showed the nurse had very different duties than today. The job description included the following tasks:**

- 1. Daily sweep and mop the floors of your ward, dust the patients furniture and window sills.**
- 2. Maintain an even temperature in your ward by bringing in a scuttle of coal for the day's business.**
- 3. Light is important to observe the patient's condition. Therefore, each day fill kerosene lamps, clean chimneys and trim wicks.**
- 4. The nurse's notes are important in aiding your physician's work. Make your pens carefully; you may whittle nibs to your individual taste.**
- 5. Each nurse should lay aside from each payday a goodly sum of her earning for her benefits during her declining years; so that she will not become a burden. For example, if you earn \$30 a month, you should set aside \$15.**
- 6. The nurse who performs her labors and serves her patients and doctors faithfully and without fault for a period of 5 years will be given an increase by the hospital administration of 5 cents per day.**

**Today's Home Health Care & Hospice Nurses are a core part of the interdisciplinary team who cares for patients in their home. Today's nursing tasks include the following:**

- 1. Assessment of the patient so a plan of care can be initiated; with the goal of preventing and shortening hospital or nursing facility stays through promotion of independent living and speeding the recovery process by allowing a person to recuperate at home; while receiving skilled care.**
- 2. Assessments include: breath sounds of a patient with COPD, bowel sounds of a patient who has a new colostomy, heart sounds and other symptoms of a patient with CHF, such as shortness of breath, effectiveness of medications and ordered treatments for a patient with cancer, wounds for signs and symptoms of infection, mental status; and compliance with medications, treatments and diet.**
- 3. Teaching a patient and their caregiver due to needs related to recovery; such as wounds, infusion therapy, new medications and new diagnosis or exacerbation of illnesses such as cancer, COPD, heart disease and diabetes.**
- 4. Perform hands on care such as dressing changes, removing stitches or staples, infusion therapy and other treatments and therapies in the home; as ordered by the patient's physician.**
- 5. Psychiatric trained RN's provide psychiatric evaluation and therapy in the home.**
- 6. Provide palliative care which emphasizes pain and symptom control for those facing life-limiting illnesses. Patients may be pursuing curative treatment, have an extended prognosis, or otherwise be inappropriate for Hospice services.**
- 7. Support the patient and family through hospice as they face the last stages of life, by offering support and comfort, primarily in the home setting, allowing dignity, symptom management, and family togetherness.**

**If you have further questions about Home Health Care or Hospice; or if you have someone you would like to refer to Home Health Care or Hospice services please feel free to contact Hoosier Uplands Home Health Care & Hospice at 800-827-2219 or 812-849-4447.**