

The Role of the Nurse on the Mission Field – Resources and Notes

Things to Consider, some of the following is from NCF <https://ncf-jcn.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions>

What is Meant by the Term Missionary Nursing?

The nursing profession originated as a call of God within the Christian church to care for the sick and suffering of this world. In a sense all nursing is missionary work as we are all called to care for others as Jesus cared for them. God has specifically called some nurses to serve him in places away from their families of origin and work among the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. God has asked these missionary nurses to move cross-culturally to present the gospel using their knowledge and skills as nurses. You were created for the journey.

How Do I Know if God is Calling Me to Go to the Mission Field?

Historically, nurses went into the nursing profession because they felt called to help others. God makes His desire for our lives known to us through reading the Bible, talking with Him in prayer, and meeting with other believers in times of worship and fellowship. It is important to listen to His voice to know if He has called you to be a missionary. This knowledge sustains the missionary nurse in times of difficulty and trial.

What are Short Term Missions?

Short-term mission work can last anywhere from a week to a year or more. Nurses who serve on short term missions may focus on using their professional skills in a rural clinic, as part of an academic learning program with a university or college, participate in disaster relief, help with infrastructure and construction, lead health promotion strategies, contribute to community development, and can partner with the local church, who can continue the work after the short term worker returns to their home. Because of limited time, short term mission workers may not learn the language beyond a few basic phrases and may not understand the culture as well.

Short-Term Missions Considerations

If you are going on a short-term mission project, the organization planning the project should make sure that the host country governing bodies gives approval for professional practice to the nursing participants in the project. It is your responsibility as a professional nurse to inquire about what licensure arrangements has been made with the host country and if there are any limitations on your practice in the host country. It may be permissible for you to become involved in community development and health education if you are unable to practice under your license. The best advice is to partner with a well-known organization, church, and/or hospital.

Long-Term Mission Commitments

It starts with counting the cost. Missionary nurses who make long-term commitments to their work usually plan to make missionary nursing a significant part of their career. They study health problems commonly found in the country where they are working, learn the local language, study the culture and customs of the people they are serving, and are prepared in Biblical studies. It is important to find the best way to bridge the gap between the host culture and Western culture through Bible stories. This enables nurses to serve as well as present the gospel of Jesus in culturally appropriate ways, using the local language, in the context of healthcare.

What Kinds of Nursing do Missionary Nurses Practice?

Your platform is not what you call yourself, but how the community views you. Missionary nurses practice all types of nursing – hospital nursing, clinic nursing, public health/community nursing, nursing education, nursing administration, and advanced practice nursing. They may work in remote villages, city slums, refugee camps, and prisons. They also focus on providing spiritual care and helping people to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. God formed you and blessed you so that you could live to use your talents, skills, and your profession on the path He has prepared for you. *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them* (Eph. 2:10).

What Kinds of Training is Needed Before Going?

That depends on what kind of nursing you will be doing, the country to which you will be going, and what you will be doing in that country. Remember, you are going to be His witness, salt, and light, to build His kingdom, as well as use your skills. Nursing practice in other countries is regulated by licensure. You will need to learn what is necessary to practice nursing in that country and follow the regulations of your host country. Just as we do not allow nurses from other countries to come to the U.S. to practice without assessing their competence, so we should also be prepared to meet the requirements for nursing practice in our host countries. Go to the International Council of Nursing for a list of members and their addresses.

Bring Your Expertise and Be Flexible

Jesus began His work by healing, and then supported it with His teaching. He loves us, so we can love others. Missionary nurses represent Jesus as they practice nursing and as His ambassador, we should seek to be knowledgeable and skillful in our nursing practice. Our nursing practice needs to be the best that we can offer. We should not take on roles and responsibilities for which we have not been prepared. Remember that the people we serve are image bearers of God and deserve our best. A good rule of thumb is that if you are not prepared to undertake a procedure in your home country, you should not attempt it in a mission setting. Gaining skills in education, leadership, or organizational development, areas of nursing often needed, will allow you to equip national nurses and improve the healthcare services in the host country. Be flexible and willing to serve.

Cultural Training is Important

Become familiar with the customs and culture of your host country. Cultural beliefs and values strongly influence healthcare practices, and the ways people interact and function. Seek to learn more about how the culture views illness, what causes illness, and what the place suffering has in light of eternity. Learning what people believe about a deity, the origins of the world, and what happens after death are helpful when presenting the gospel message. Language fluency gives great insight into culture far beyond book learning. Learning the greetings, simple requests, and numbers will help you connect to people. Establish trust and be humble.

A Spiritual Foundation is Key

God has one mission – that all nations worship Him. A solid spiritual foundation cannot be overemphasized. As a missionary nurse engages others in a dialogue about their relationship with God, his/her relationship must be on solid ground. Prayer, the study of the bible, and fellowship with fellow Christians is prerequisites for successful ministry and overcoming adversity that is related to missionary nursing. Do not be surprised if part of your practice becomes church planting and evangelism. Learn the bible stories, such as The Good Samaritan, The Bleeding Woman, and The Paralytic, to use in health teaching and discipleship.

Preparing for the Field (from Laura Smelter, MD, Director of Training for CHSC)

1. Plan for the call – plan your life so you can go, be careful with what you say yes to at home, talk with bosses, friends, and family (to get them on the same page and understand). Prep your mind, read books on leadership, conflict, theology of suffering, diseases, and world events.
2. Walk with God – our personal holiness and integrity is part of our gift to others and sharing Christ.
3. Be ready – learn language, google translate, engage in training, security
4. Plan for return before leaving – prepare family and friends, may not want to talk and/or need some time.
5. **Plan for everything, expect nothing.**

Books

- **Peace Child by Don Richardson**
- **Finding Calcutta by Mary Poplin**
- **When Healthcare Hurts by Greg Seager**
- **Preach and Heal by Chuck Fielding**
- **Live Life on Purpose by Claude Hickman**