

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION  
INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

906  
Program & policy

0	GEV	8-29-25	5/21	
Nursing education				

FORM 106

Memo for Dr. Vincent:

The following considerations bear upon our general policy in nursing education:

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1. In aiding in the creation of a new profession in the several countries of Europe we have an obligation to make sure that our standards are sufficiently high and courses of training reasonably adequate. There is no great difficulty in keeping educational progress at a low level or attracting students of poor preliminary training. In introducing nursing or public health or medicine, we have, I believe, a special obligation to set standards well above the level that we may expect the country as a whole to maintain. Unless we do this our elevating influence is negligible. Adherence to this general principle has characterized Foundation effort generally. In aiding in the introduction of modern medicine in China we have created a school at Peking of very high standards. While we do not expect that medical schools generally throughout the country will reach this level, it is believed that the presence of this ideal is more important than the training of any large number of students in this specific school. In aiding in the training of health officers co-operation has been given to Johns Hopkins University and Harvard in this country for the establishment of schools of high standards and of distinctly scientific tendencies as evidenced by the amount of time given to research and advanced work. In medical education elsewhere our aid has gone almost entirely to a small number of schools of the very highest standard in given countries.
  2. A good deal of emphasis has been placed on the need for numbers of nurses and health visitors, and upon the inability economically of countries of Central Europe to maintain courses of great length or to insist upon candidates of high preliminary training. While considerations of general economic and educational conditions must be given due weight, I wonder if we have not been unduly impressed by them in considering nursing education. In China and Siam there is crying need for numbers of physicians, and there is a great lack of financial resources. Yet this has not prevented us from insisting upon high standards in medical schools that we have aided in these countries. In general I believe countries will pay for services which they think valuable. I believe that it may be a disservice to help the countries of Europe to a belief that nursing is a service which may be purchased cheaply.
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August 29, 1925.

3. In considering aid which we may give I think we may regard ourselves in nursing as in medicine and health, to have no obligation to give schools generally, and no obligation to try to supply the rank and file of any profession. Our obligations rather are to make demonstrations, set standards, make possible educational ventures beyond those which the countries themselves would be able or willing to undertake unaided, and to assist in training leaders and teachers. I think we would be entirely justified in reserving our assistance to a few "light houses", to the occasional school that is about to make a real contribution by its influence and by the leaders and teachers of other schools which it may turn out.

E.R.E.