

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

study. A nurse or other specially trained person can secure basic data from the examinee, such as height, weight, age, and the history. Nurses may also assist in other portions of the examination when specially trained and authorized to do so. This relief from minor details will give the physician more time to devote to an analysis of the whole man. Custom requires that a nurse or other female attendant be present when women are being examined.

Health problems of women

There is no reliable evidence to support the view that women are more susceptible than men to occupational health hazards, except during pregnancy.

The policy of some companies is to dismiss women on learning of their pregnancy. As a result, women may conceal their condition until it becomes obvious, frequently not until the last half of the pregnancy. Since the early months present the danger of spontaneous abortion, it is desirable for women working during this period to be under the supervision of the medical department. A pregnant woman should consult her own doctor, and a report of her condition should be given to the plant doctor so that he may determine the advisability of her continuing to work.

Lead exposure preceding pregnancy is potentially dangerous, since lead concentration in the blood, tissue, and body fluids remains in the system for many months. Because of change in the physiological mechanism of women during pregnancy, pregnant women might be adversely affected by exposure to concentrations of toxic substances which would otherwise be safe. Chemical substances, such as carbon monoxide, chloroform, phosphorus, and mercury, which pass through the placenta, may produce harmful effects on the fetus and lead to abortion.

Occupational health nurse

Occupational nursing is a distinct branch of the nursing profession. The position requires a qualified graduate nurse, who is licensed in the state where employed. In addition, it is desirable that the occupational health nurse have some knowledge of workmen's compensation laws, insurance, health and safety laws, occupational diseases, sanitation, first aid, and record keeping.

The occupational health nurse works with the physician in the plant and is his representative when he is away. However, he should provide her with written directives that have been discussed between them and that they mutually understand. That is, the establishment of medical diagnosis and definition of treatment are the function of the physician, whereas the nurse carries out procedures defined by him. She is often delegated by him, in his absence, to perform first aid for minor injuries and ailments that are of the type usually neglected or subjected to self-remedies. Further, she must exercise discretion in handling non-occupational ailments and refer the employee to his own physician.

When the physician is only located at the plant part time, the nurse is responsible to him on professional matters, and to a member of management on administrative matters.

The occupational health nurse must maintain a confidential professional relationship with the employees in conformity with legal

Fig 38-3 A portable audiometer can be used for accurate hearing evaluations



Courtesy Bellone Hearing Aid Co