the functions of the physician The nurse is not a substitute for him Each has a legally defined area of practice and responsibility An effective company medical program requires the services of both a physician and a nurse

According to *The Legal Scope of Industrial Nursing Practice, a statement published* by the American Medical Association in 1959

"Courts have held that professional nurses have a legal duty to interpret evidence presented by the patient possibly indicating the need for medical attention, and to proceed in the light of that interpretation to do what is required for the patient, as for example the need to call a physician, to discontinue a treatment where there is evidence of its harmful effect, e g , on an unconscious patient, or to determine the patient's need for special medication, e g , sedatives There can be little doubt that by custom and usage the relationship between doctor, patient, and nurse is one in which the parties recognize that the nurse as well as the physician has the function and responsibility to observe and interpret the patient's reactions

"In emergency cases, industrial nurses have a duty to determine the need for prompt medical attention, to make a tentative diagnosis of the patient's condition, and to employ necessary resuscitative and first aid measures "

#### Physical examination programs

Supervision of the health status of workers by qualified medical personnel is essential if any occupational health program is to obtain maximum benefits for both employer and employee Therefore, a program of physical examinations should be established The examining physician should discuss all significant findings with the worker He should use good judgment to prevent the raising of unnecessary fears, while emphasizing the importance of obtaining adequate personal medical care A transcript of the data may be supplied to the worker's personal physician or for insurance purposes, with the consent of the employee Courts, workmen's compensation commissions, or health authorities may request this information by legal means, but employee consent is a more agreeable method Certainly the confidential character of health examination records should be observed

The employer should be informed of a potentially harmful work environment detected through examination of persons subjected to it

**Scope of the examination.** It is impossible to set forth what constitutes a complete examination, or even a suitable examination Physicians have different opinions regarding the relative values of various test procedures, based on their own training and experience Therefore, the scope of physical examinations should be determined by the company physician, who is familiar with the operations involved The nature of the industry, its inherent hazards, the variations in jobs, in physical demands and in health exposures are determinants The values of different test procedures and their cost in time and dollars must be assayed Perhaps examinations should be different in scope for different jobs For example, the physical condition of the ironworker to be engaged in construction of the skyscraper is a far different problem from that of the sedentary seamstress, yet there are basic physical examination considerations applicable to each

The various kinds of examinations may be classified as follows preplacement, periodic, transfer, promotion, special, and termination The nurse works with the physician in all these examinations

**Preplacement examinations.** The preplacement examination is made to determine and record the physical condition of the prospective worker so that he can be assigned to a suitable job in accordance with his mental ability and physical capacity, and in which his disabilities, if any, will not affect his personal efficiency, safety, and health, or the safety of others The applicant (or his personal physician, on the applicant's approval) is advised of conditions needing attention Medical department follow-up may or may not be necessary

It must be a paramount principle that the purpose of the program is selection *and* placement—not merely selection of the physically perfect and rejection of all others For further information, see "Selective Placement" later in this chapter