

# INTERVIEW WITH MADAM MAIMOONA SHUJAU, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NURSING

## *“FOUR DECADES OF DEDICATED SERVICE”*

Interviewed by Hafeeza Ibrahim

### Hafeeza

Maimoona, thank you for giving me this opportunity to ask some questions about your nursing services. The main purpose is to document the services of our Nurse leaders of the past decades in order that those who follow us will be aware of the circumstances we worked in those days.

I feel privileged to have worked with you in the Central Hospital in the 80's and have learnt a great deal from you, especially how you deal calmly in a crisis situation.

### **1. Could you please share with us some of your experiences in Central Hospital?**

“I joined Central Hospital as a Registered Nurse on 14th January 1981”. At that time there were only 7 registered Nurses and all the other nurses were Enrolled Nurses. The whole hospital was managed by us and it was not an easy task. From nursing care to any administrative work, it was the responsibility of us, registered nurses. There were 5 wards (2 Medical wards: male and female,



Surgical ward, Gynae ward and Pediatric ward). Other units were OPD, Labour room and OT. During most of the shifts only one registered nurse would be on duty and she has to be responsible for everything that happens during that shift. All intravenous injections, major dressings, invasive procedures like I/G tube insertions, catheterizations etc were all carried out by us.

All normal deliveries were also conducted by us. All blood donors were also bled by us. We had no pediatricians, no anesthetists, or surgeons; no gynecologists and not even a physician! The few doctors who were there were only medical officers.



If there were any medical emergency calls from any island, we registered nurses have to travel in the coastguard and fetch the patient and bring to Male'. Sometimes we have to spend even two days on the sea with the patient. Doing duties, were long hours of hard work and due to the shortage of staff, by the time we were able to finish our shift and handover it would be an additional two hours or more. There was no "overtime allowance" at the time. Whoever comes for duty has to take a full round of the whole hospital. Surprisingly, we knew all critical cases and new admissions as we kept a note of their details. Even with all those difficulties there was a very unique bond between patients, nurses and doctors. Maybe, because people at that time were simpler and more appreciated our service.

## 2. What are some challenges you faced?

Mainly the shortage of staff. Managing a hospital with such a limited number of staff was a problem every day. As I said earlier, we were only six registered nurses and the other nurses

were enrolled nurses. Every ward had barely two nurses and with sick leaves it was a big problem to provide nursing care to our patients. Specially during night duty if there were any sick leaves, we even went to fetch nurses from their homes. There were no replacement nurses available. The other challenge was shortage of consumables, instruments

and equipment. We had to be very careful and cautious with the supplies we had in our stock. With the limited quantity of things we had, if there was any breakage, it took months for it to be replaced. Managing our personal lives and family was also a big challenge as we have to do such long hours of duty. My sincere appreciation and gratitude goes to my mother who has taken care of my children, in my absence, without which I would have never been able to give this service.

## 3. How will you compare nursing then and now from a nurse's perspective?

When you compare nursing then and now: at present we have wards, and units where they have their own respective nurses, which we didn't have that time. Those few enrolled nurses who come for duty will be allocated to different wards. Maximum two nurses would be on duty and work load being high, good nursing care cannot be provided.

Today patients being allocated to nurses according to their condition ratio wise, has

improved nursing care immensely. Specialty wards and units need nurses to be specialized in areas like cardiology, nephrology etc. Previously nurses just carry out orders given by doctors. There was no care plan for patients which hinders to give holistic nursing care to patients.

#### **4. What are some of your accomplishments? What are you most proud about with regard to your service?**

I joined Central Hospital as Staff Nurse Grade 2. From then till now I have completed almost every position of nursing in this country. At present my post is the Director General of Nursing. I have completed 40 years in this field. The Nursing Department being the biggest department in IGMH, I have managed more than 800 staff. During this long period, I am proud to say that hardly any patient or even a relative has been unhappy about my service. Most of the nurses who have worked under me look up to me as a good role model. Throughout the long years of my service, countless numbers of patients and their relatives have become my friends. It gives me immense pleasure when patients and their relatives approach me for advice about their medical problems, even today.

The most surprising and rewarding gift which I have received from a patient was when I came to know that they have named their newborn baby after me!

#### **What advice would you give to new graduates and nursing students?**

My advice would be that whenever they give nursing care to patients, they should always

first” put themselves in the patient's shoes”. Treat them as how you would expect nurses to treat you, when you go to a hospital with a close family member. This small act can do wonders to gain patients' and their relatives' confidence. Nursing is said to be noble because it is different from all other professions. It needs empathy, sympathy understanding, dedication, and patience. You need to acquire all these characteristics and more. You have to understand that when a patient comes to hospital, he/she needs your services and assistance and it is our duty to attend to them wholeheartedly. Sometimes you may even need to advocate on behalf of your patient. As a nurse we cannot afford to make a mistake as it may cost a life. Be friends with the patients and their relatives. You need to learn some basic information about your patient's life history which can assist you in giving nursing care Make them feel at home, so that they share everything with you. The joy you get when they are happy with your service will ensure you that their satisfaction is the biggest reward you can get.

#### **Hafeeza:**

Thank you Maimoona, for taking the time to share in detail your experiences and thoughts about nursing. I admire your long service, **d e d i c a t i o n a n d s e l f e s s n e s s .** CONGRATULATIONS for 40 long years of service!