



# Duke University Medical Center Intercom

VOL. 25, NO. 48

DEC. 8, 1978

DURHAM, N.C.

## She's working to assure best possible care

By David Williamson

Anyone who thinks that a nurse is just a white-clad woman who fluffs up pillows and hands out pills in a hospital could get quite an education from Maureen Callahan.

Callahan, a neurosurgical nurse specialist at Duke, helped to write the book on her variety of nursing.

She also helped to write the test that determines who has carefully read the book.

"I think most consumers are still under the impression that a nurse is a nurse, but in reality nursing has developed into a highly specialized profession," she said in an interview.

### Standards of excellence

By completing requirements established by national nursing organizations, it's now possible to get certified in an increasing variety of fields including psychiatry, orthopaedics, family practice, pediatrics, gerontology, critical care and neurosurgery.

The goal, Callahan explained, is to provide standards of excellence that nurses can strive for and to assure patients and their families that they will

get the best care possible in time of illness.

Toward that end, the 32-year-old New Jersey native spent much of her free time from 1975-77 writing sections of a 400-page book published by the American Association of Neurosurgical Nurses. Her contributions to the "Core Curriculum" focused on injuries to the nervous system, various pain syndromes and the care of patients with pain problems.

She also wrote about the psychosocial

needs of neurosurgical patients and their families, including how to cope with changes in one's body image.

"A lot of neurosurgical patients have to have their heads shaved, for example, and that's not something to be taken lightly," she said. "Whether the patient is a 4-year-old or a 70-year-old man who doesn't have much hair, it can be a disturbing experience that nurses can help to alleviate."

Last winter, Callahan participated in

the final step in formalizing certification for neurosurgical nurses by designing part of their national examination. One hundred and thirty-seven persons took the first test in October.

It was a complicated, but stimulating process, she said, that involved writing 50 multiple-choice questions of her own and then meeting several times with other nursing specialists from around the

(Continued on page 4)

## Robinson named McAlister Prof

Dr. Roscoe R. (Ike) Robinson, associate vice president for health affairs and chief executive officer of Duke Hospital, has been named Florence McAlister Professor of Medicine, according to Dr. Frederic N. Cleaveland, university provost.

Robinson, who succeeds retiring Dr. Eugene A. Stead in the McAlister professorship, is the author or co-author of more than 100 scientific papers on kidney function and kidney disease.



DR. ROBINSON

A graduate of Central State University in Edmond, Okla., he earned his M.D. at the University of Oklahoma in 1954 and completed his residency in medicine at Duke in 1958.

Robinson was named to the medical school faculty as an associate in 1960 and by 1969, had risen to full professor.

He has held offices and positions with numerous organizations including the American Heart Association, the National Heart and Lung Institute, the National Institute of Arthritis, Metabolism and Digestive Diseases, the National Kidney Foundation and the American Board of Internal Medicine.

Also director of the Division of Nephrology since 1962, Robinson assumed his duties as associate vice president and chief executive officer of the hospital in 1976.



SHARING HER EXPERTISE — Using a plastic model, Maureen Callahan, neurosurgical nurse specialist, discusses anatomy of the brain with Gail O'Connor who is assistant head nurse on the Neurosurgical Unit. In

addition to teaching patients and staff at the hospital and performing other duties, Callahan has played a major role in establishing the first national certification for neurosurgical nurses. (Photo by Thad Sparks)

## 'It was difficult to say who was watching whom'

By Parker Herring

Tourists generally expect to do most of the looking when they visit another country.

But Dr. Ruby Wilson noticed that she and her colleagues were the objects of the looking when they visited the People's Republic of China.

"It was difficult to say who was watching whom," she said.

Wilson, professor and dean of the School of Nursing, was one of 22 health professionals who recently returned from China as part of a health study group.

### Difficult to be inconspicuous

The group of nurses and physicians flew to Hong Kong and then visited the Chinese cities of Peking, Canton, Shanghai and Soochow, numerous villages, small communities and other rural and urban organizations.

Because foreigners are still something

of a rarity to the mainland of China, Dean Wilson and her colleagues found it difficult to be inconspicuous.

"We were a curiosity on the streets and in the shops. There were so few American tourists that wherever we went we immediately drew a crowd," she said.

Wilson said she found a real "esprit de corps" existed among the Chinese people.

"They appeared contented," she said. "It was as if they were each saying, 'Now I have a job, food and clothing . . . I have a purpose for being.'"

### Free of disease, crime

Before the communist takeover in 1949 (which the Chinese refer to as the Liberation), it was certain that "there would be malnutrition, poverty and slums for the common man in China," Wilson said.

"But now the country is free of infectious disease and crime," she said. "I think it is amazing how Chairman Mao

delivered over 800 million people into a different area of belief so that they now have good health and a system of government that is essentially effective."

But Wilson said she also found it "somewhat frightening" to think that 800 million people can be converted the way the Chinese have been.

One way the government has achieved this conversion is by putting everyone to work and using all available land and resources for producing necessary goods and services.

"Everyone I saw was working, or actively engaged," Wilson said. "And there wasn't any open ground. All of the land was cultivated with crops. Weeds were scarce. If the land wasn't cultivated there was a building on it."

The dean observed that women and men worked side by side in the fields and in the factories.

(Continued on page 3)