

Nursing: Then and Now

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Introduction:

Nursing began to keep people healthy and, to provide comfort and assurance to the sick. Although the general goals of nursing have remained relatively the same over the centuries, ever-advancing Science and the changing of society's needs have deeply influenced the practice of nursing. As such, it has gone through many stages and has been an integral part of social movements. Nursing has been involved in the existing culture, shaped by it and yet being developed by it.

Stages of Nursing:

Nursing from ancient times to the twenty first century has gone through many changes. The changes have been described under these headings:

Early Civilization (Before AD)

Nursing in the Early Christian Era - (1 – 500AD)

Nursing in Middle Ages - (500 – 1500AD)

Nineteenth century - Period during Nightingale

Period of Early Civilization:

The early civilization started in Egypt. In Egypt, they had medical laws as fixed codes. The law clearly mentioned what a doctor could do and could not do. During this period, traditional female roles of wife, mother, daughter, and sister are considered as nurturing and caring roles. Most nursing historians agree that nursing or the care of sick and injured has been performed by those who provide nurturing roles. It had been the females since the dawn of human life who provided such care to the human beings. Egyptian physicians are believed to have specialized in certain diseases. They also hired women, later known as midwives, to assist with childbirth. These women were the first records nurses.

In ancient India, women held a relatively high position in the society. Their main activities were management of the homes and during illness in the family, they took care of them. At that time in India, early hospitals were staffed by male nurses who were required to meet four qualifications: knowledge, cleverness, devotedness to the patient, and, purity of mind and body.

Sri Lanka also adopted India's methods. There were hospitals and well prepared physicians and nurses who attended the sick people. Mihintale and Anuradapura hospitals are very good images. Will Durant, a well known historian, mentioned in his book that the "world's best hospital was built in Sri Lanka". In 4th

century B.C. King Bandugabhayan built that hospital and later it was demolished. In 956-972 A.D., the 4th Mahintale built one hospital in Mihintale, which contained outpatient, inpatient, surgical, pharmacy department and a beautiful garden. From these hospitals we came to know that about 2000 years ago they have practiced definite medicine and nursing. Kings built temples, monastery and palaces for their satisfaction. Hospitals were built for old disabled patients and the people in need.

Nursing in early Christian Era:

At the beginning of Christianity, nursing began to have a formal and a more clearly defined role. Lead by the belief that love and caring for others was important, women made the first visits to sick people, male gave nursing care and buried the dead. Nursing became a respected vocation. There were three groups of Christian women known as apostolic orders. They were either unmarried or widows, who devoted themselves to the service of other women. They visited the homes of the poor and sick, provided food and money for the needy and prayed with them. They gave medicine and their services according to their ability and knowledge.

Nursing in Middle Ages - (500 – 1500AD)

More hospitals were built during early middle ages. Nurses delivered care and depended on physicians for direction. Nurse midwifery, as one of the oldest nursing roles, flourished. Much nursing care was provided by monks for male patients and by nuns for female patients. During the period of Fifteenth to early Nineteenth Century, due to the extensive population growth in cities, the lack of hygiene and sanitation, and the increasing poverty in urban centers resulted in serious health problems. Many monasteries and convents were closed, which lead to a tremendous shortage of people to care for the sick. Women who had committed crimes were recruited into nursing in lieu of serving sentences. "Wayward" women of low status became "nurses" instead of going to jail. The only acceptable nursing role was within a religious order, where services were provided as part of Christianity charity.

Nineteenth Century - Period of Nightingale

Florence Nightingale was born in 1820, in a wealthy family. She was determined to become a nurse since

she believed she was "called by God to help others and to improve the well-being of mankind". She visited Kaiserswerth and received nurse's training in 1850 for three months. The outbreak of the Crimean War (1854 - 1856) gave Nightingale an opportunity for achievement; When the Crimean War began (Between England, France & Russia), reports came back to England about the terrible conditions for wounded and sick soldiers. Florence Nightingale volunteered to go to Turkey (Britain & France). Thirty-eight women, including 18 Anglican and Roman Catholic sisters, accompanied Florence Nightingale to the warfront. She established more sanitary conditions and ordered supplies, beginning with clothing and bedding.

After the war, Nightingale established the Nightingale Training School for Nurses at St. Thomas' hospital in London (1860); the school served as a model for other training school; as the founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale established the first nursing philosophy based on health maintenance and restoration.

Milestones in Nursing:

There were certain milestones that took place in nursing as time goes:

1. The International Council of Nurses (ICN) was founded in 1899 and was the first international organization for health care professionals.
2. In 1900, American Journal of Nursing was introduced and scholarly articles have enhanced the notion of nursing education.
3. In 1946 the American Nurses Association was established. The mission was to enhance collaboration among practicing nurses and educators.
4. Training and Education - Development and Establishment of Nursing Schools all over the world.
5. Regulatory Agency/ Body - Existence of Regulating Body for Nurses that sets that the conduct of nurses and regulates safe nursing practice
6. Nursing has extended roles and has various participation in the community service and industry.
7. Involvement in Research and geared research outputs results towards Evidenced-Based Practice.

Career Opportunities

There was a time when professional nurses had very little choice of service because most nursing was centered in the hospital and bedside nursing. Most of the nurses served as staff nurses only a few of them got opportunities for promotion. But the working situation for nurses is very different today. Whether graduate of a certificate/ diploma or a

degree programme, there are wide opportunities for service. Today the nurses play multiple roles in different fields. Hospital nursing service offers the broadest opportunities of service in practice and administrative positions. Community Health Nursing is encouraged by the Government. It focuses on preventive medicine. Professional nurses who are interested in teaching have a broad scope in Nursing. Other than this they can work as an Occupational Health Nurse in Industries, Military nurse in Military hospital, Geriatric nurse in old aged homes etc.

Nursing in Sri Lanka

The first nursing school was started in Manipay in 1890. After that the formal Nursing Education was established in the School of Nursing, Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1939. Then School of Nursing in Kandy, Galle, Ratnapura, Kurunegala, Jaffna, Anuradhapura, Batticaloa, Badulla, Kandana, Sri Jayawardhanapura and Ampara followed. Sri Lanka Nurses Association was established in 1943. It is the only professional organization which exists for nurses in Sri Lanka. In 1966, The School of Psychiatric Nursing, Mulleriyawa was commenced. In 1960 Post Basic School of Nursing (PBSN) was established. It provides diploma in Teaching and Supervision for Nursing Tutors and diploma in Ward Management and Supervision for Ward Sisters. Diploma in Public Health Nursing is provided by the National Institute of Health Sciences at Kalutara. In 1994, BSc nursing degree programme for the registered nurses was commenced at the Open University, Sri Lanka. Later in 2005, University of Sri Jayawardanapura commenced the B.Sc. Nursing Programme. Followed that University of Jaffna, Peradeniya, Eastern, Ruhunu and Kotelawela Defence University have commenced B.Sc. nursing degree programme. Recently, the Sri Lanka Nursing Council (SLNC) has been established. It is the registering body for the nurses in Sri Lanka.

The Future: Trends & Challenges for Nurses and Nursing

Trends in Nursing are related to changes in the society because nursing serves to meet the needs of the society. Any major change in the society will bring about a new trend in nursing. Among the major changes in recent years, the following have greatly influenced present trends in nursing:

1. Impact of chronic disease on health care.
2. Demand for nurses with a degree.
3. More job opportunities for nursing educators.
4. A more highly educated public.
5. Expanding Technology.
6. Preventative Care.

7. Nursing shortage and greying workforce as key issues in many countries.
8. Greater investment in research and development.
9. Rising skill requirements.
10. New areas of Nursing specialization.
11. Promotion of evidence based practice.
12. Multidisciplinary team approach.

Conclusion

Knowledge of reviewing history and time line of nursing has given an insight to acknowledge the hard work done by nursing leaders and has given a perspective to pursue the challenges of 21st century health care. We can infer now that how an occupation can change into a profession.