

INTRODUCTION TO NURSING

Earlier only Medicine, Law and the ministry were accepted as profession. Now a days, Nursing is also considered as a profession, which within the health care sector focuses on the care of individuals, families and communities so they may attain, maintain or recover optimal health and quality of life.

The word **Nurse** was derived from the **Latin** word **Nutritious**, which means **Nourishing**.

Nursing services are considered as essential for every patient in need of care. As nursing is an important part of health care delivery system, the nurses are required to learn and understand the system to effectively deliver quality care within it.

Nursing:

Nursing is the process of recognizing, understanding and meeting the health needs of any person or society and is based on a constantly changing body of scientific knowledge.

Nursing encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings. Nursing includes the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and the care of ill, disabled and dying people. Advocacy, promotion of a safe environment, research, participation in shaping health policy and in patient and health systems management, and education are also key nursing roles.

Definitions of Nursing:

Virginia Avenel Henderson, defines Nursing in functional terms as, “The unique function of the nurse is to assist the individual, sick or well, in the performance of those activities contributing to health or its recovery (or to peaceful death) that he would perform unaided if he had the necessary strength, will or knowledge”.

According to American Nurses Association, “Nursing is the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities; prevention of illness and injury; alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human responses; and advocacy in health care for individuals, families, communities, and populations”.

Royal College of Nursing UK Defines Nursing as “The use of clinical judgment in the provision of care to enable people to improve, maintain, or recover health, to cope with health problems, and to achieve the best possible quality of life, whatever their disease or disability, until death”.

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environment, research, participation in shaping health policy and in patient and health systems management, and education are also key nursing roles”.

History of Nursing

Nursing, the history span from the history of Human kind. There has been need to provide care and comfort to those suffering from illness and injury from the day when human kind started living this world. More than an applied science nursing is considered as an art, which provides skilful care for the sick. The art of Nursing is considered to have its birth in every home where a mother takes care of the well being of the family members. It is this mother care that through the age developed into a skilled art and a well organised science.

Pre-Historic Nursing:

- The practice of nursing in the prehistoric period was strongly guided by health beliefs.
- Nursing and medical practice were delineated by beliefs of magic, religion, and superstition.
- Individuals who were ill were considered to be cursed by evil spirits and evil gods that entered the human body and caused suffering and death if not cast out.

Nursing in Early civilization:

Egypt: Ancient Egyptians are noted for their accomplishments at such an early period. They were the first to use the concept of suture (Stitch) in repairing wounds. They also were the first to be recorded as developing community planning that resulted in a decrease in public health problems. The Egyptians invented the development of the calendar and writing that denoted the initiation of recorded history. The oldest records date back before Christ in sixteenth century BC Egypt, containing natural pharmacologic remedies was written to assist in the care and management of disease (Ellis and Hartley, 2001).

Palestine: From 1400 to 1200 BC the Hebrews migrated from the Arabian Desert and gradually settled in Palestine, where they became an agricultural society. Under the leadership of Moses, the Hebrews developed the Mosaic Code, which represented one of the first organized methods of disease control and prevention. It contained public health laws that did not allow the eating of a slaughtered animal dead longer than 3 days. Individuals who were thought to have communicable diseases were isolated from the public and could return to their families only after the priest had declared them healed (Ellis and Hartley, 2001). Males who were Hebrew priests and selected women, usually widows and maidens who cared for the sick in their homes, delivered health care : bringing both physical and spiritual comfort to those in need (Stanhope and Lancaster, 2000).

SURA'S ❖ NURSING

Greece: From 1500 to 100 BC Greek philosophers sought to understand man and his relationship with the gods, nature, and other men. They believed that the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology controlled health and illness. Temples built to honor Asclepius, the god of medicine, were designated to care for the sick.

Hippocrates was the first to attribute disease to natural causes rather than supernatural causes and curses of the gods. Hippocrates' teachings also encouraged health care providers to look at not just the part of the patient that was sick, but to include the patient's environment (Kalisch and Kalisch, 1995).

In the ancient Greek culture little is documented about nursing. Attendants - "basket healers" assisted the temple priests and physicians and traveled from town to town with physicians to offer their services (Stanhope and Lancaster, 2000).

India: Dating from 2000 to 1200 BC, the earliest cultures of India were Hindu. The sacred books of the Hindu, Vedas, were used to guide health care practices. The Vedas included herbs, spices, displays of magic, and charms. These ingredients were used to rid the body of demons and cure illness. The Indians documented information concerning prenatal care and childhood illnesses. Public hospitals were constructed from 274 to 236 BC and were staffed by male nurses with qualifications and duties similar to those of the twentieth-century practical nurse. The Hindu physicians performed major and minor surgeries, including limb amputations, cesarean deliveries, and wound suturing. Women were primarily responsible for caring for the home and family, and they did not work outside the home. (Ellis and Hartley, 2001; Walton, Barondess, and Locke, 1994).

China: The teachings of Confucius (551-479 BC) had a powerful impact on the customs and practices of the people of ancient China. One tradition that exemplified their belief about health and illness was the Yin and Yang philosophy. The Chinese believed that an imbalance between these two forces would result in illness, whereas balance between the yin and yang represented good health (Giger and Davidhizar, 1999).

The ancient Chinese used a variety of treatments believed to promote health and harmony, including acupuncture to affect the balance of yin and yang. Hydrotherapy, massage, and exercise were used as preventive health measures (Giger and Davidhizar, 1999).

The Chinese also used drug therapy to manage disease conditions and recorded more than 1000 drugs derived from animals, vegetables, and minerals (Walton, Barondess, and Locke, 1994).

Rome: The Roman Empire (27 BC-476 AD), a military dictatorship, adapted medical practices from the countries they conquered and the physicians they enslaved. The first military hospital in Europe was established in Rome. Both male and female attendants assisted in the care of the sick. Galen was a famous Greek physician who worked in Rome and made important contributions to the practice of medicine by expanding

SURA'S ❖ NURSING

his knowledge in anatomy, physiology, pathology, and medical therapeutics (Walton, Barondess, and Locke, 1994).

Nursing in the Middle age:

The Middles Ages (476 BC-1450 AD) followed the demise of the Roman Empire (Walton, Barondess, and Locke, 1994). Women used herbs and new methods of healing, whereas men continued to use purging, leeching, and mercury. This period also saw the Roman Catholic Church become a central figure in the organization and management of health care.

Most of the changes in health care were based on the Christian concepts of charity and the sanctity of human life. Wives of emperors and other women considered noble became nurses. Nurses also provided some medical care, although in most hospitals and monasteries female nurses who were not midwives were forbidden to witness childbirth, help with gynecologic examinations, or even diaper male infants (Kalish and Kalish, 1986).

Nursing in The Renaissance Period:

The Renaissance and Reformation periods (1500-1700), also known as the rebirth of Europe, followed the Middle Ages. Major advancements were made in Pharmacology, Chemistry, and Medical knowledge including Anatomy, Physiology, and Surgery.

Nursing was no longer the respected profession it had once been. This period was referred to as the “Dark Ages of Nursing” (Ellis and Hartley, 2001). Several nursing groups, such as the Order of the Visitation of St. Mary, St. Vincent de Paul, and the Sisters of Charity, were organized to give time, service, and money to the poor and sick.

The Sisters of Charity recruited young women for training in nursing, developed educational programs, and cared for abandoned children. In 1640 St. Vincent de Paul established the Hospital for the Foundling to care for the many orphaned and abandoned children (Ellis and Hartley, 1988).

20th Century:

Hospital-based training came to the force in the early 1900s, with an emphasis on practical experience. The Nightingale-style school began to disappear. Hospitals and physicians saw women in nursing as a source of free or inexpensive labour. Exploitation of nurses was not uncommon by employers, physicians and educational providers. Many nurses saw active duty in World War I, but the profession was transformed during the Second World War. British nurses of the Army Nursing Service were part of every overseas campaign. More nurses volunteered for service in the US Army and Navy than any other occupation. The Nazis had their own Brown Nurses, 40,000 strong. Two dozen German Red Cross nurses were awarded the Iron Cross for heroism under fire. The modern era saw the development of undergraduate and post-graduate nursing degrees. Advancement of nursing research and a desire for association and organization led to the formation of

SURA'S ❖ NURSING

a wide variety of professional organizations and academic journals. Growing recognition of nursing as a distinct academic discipline was accompanied by an awareness of the need to define the theoretical basis for practice.

21st Century:

Professional nurses in the twenty-first century are faced with many challenges within the dynamic state of health care. Changing duties, responsibilities, and conflicts amidst nursing shortages and public concern over patient safety and quality of care characterize present-day practice. These changes require professional nurses to have core competency in critical thinking, communication, assessment, leadership, and technical skills, as well as knowledge of health promotion/disease prevention, information technology, health systems, and public policy. In addition to the issues of access, cost, quality, and accountability in health care, nurses today are challenged by an aging population, consumer health values, and an increasingly intercultural society.

Through periods of war, socioeconomic change, and health care reform, nurses have played a vital role in initiating change to improve the health care arena. Nurses have provided the integrity to maintain the quality of care in all health care settings.

The evolution of the practice from the treatment of disease to health promotion and disease prevention has led the way in determining the type of providers needed to care for patients in the future. This evolution will continue to provide the foundation for the scope of practice, educational curricula, scholarship, and research necessary for nurses to lead and manage the health care environment of the future.

Nurses will continue to increase knowledge, manage technology, and maintain ethical standards to provide high quality care to individuals, families, and communities throughout the world.

IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTORS IN THE FIELD OF NURSING

- **Florence Nightingale (1820 - 1910)**

