

The Historical Review of Nursing in Cyprus during the Ottoman Period (1571 - 1878) and the British Period (1878 - 1960)

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Abstract

Background: For nurses, the knowledge of the history of their art is central, both to understanding their science, but also their practice within the health care system. Therefore, it was necessary recounting the insufficient development of Nursing in Cyprus during the Ottoman period and the rapid development during the British period.

Objective: The purpose of this study was the historical overview of the development of Nursing in Cyprus during the Ottoman and the British period.

Methodology: Historical research has been used, more specifically primary, secondary and tertiary sources were used through the review of domestic and international literature.

Results: During the Ottoman period the lack of any health service was evident and there was no effective state welfare for medical or nursing care for the residents. The foundation of the first health structures reached with the concession of domination of the island by the British. The Nursing profession was officially established in Cyprus in 1951 with the Nursing and Midwifery Law of 1951. Despite the presence of many British nurses throughout Cyprus, and sending several Cypriots young girls abroad for studies, the nursing industry was not sufficient to meet the needs of the population.

Keywords: Cyprus, Historical Development, Ottoman rule, British rule, Nursing, Nurse and combination of those words.

Περίληψη

Εισαγωγή: Για τους νοσηλευτές, η γνώση της ιστορίας της τέχνης τους είναι κεντρικής σημασίας για την κατανόηση της επιστήμης τους αλλά και για την πρακτική τους εντός του συστήματος υγειονομικής περίθαλψης. Ως εκ τούτου, κρίθηκε αναγκαία η ιστορική ανασκόπηση της ανεπαρκούς ανάπτυξης της νοσηλευτικής στην Κύπρο κατά την περίοδο της Τουρκοκρατίας αλλά και της ραγδαίας ανάπτυξης τόσο του κλάδου όσο και των υπηρεσιών υγείας στο νησί κατά την περίοδο της Αγγλοκρατίας.

Σκοπός: Η ιστορική ανασκόπηση της ανάπτυξης της Νοσηλευτικής στην Κύπρο κατά την περίοδο της Τουρκοκρατίας και της Αγγλοκρατίας.

Μεθοδολογία: Χρησιμοποιήθηκε μεθοδολογία ιστορικής έρευνας, μέσα από την συστηματική ανασκόπηση πρωτογενών, δευτερογενών και τριτογενών πηγών της εγχώριας και διεθνούς βιβλιογραφίας.

Αποτελέσματα: Κατά την Οθωμανική περίοδο η έλλειψη οποιασδήποτε υπηρεσίας υγείας ήταν εμφανής και δεν υπήρχε αποτελεσματικό κράτος πρόνοιας για ιατρική ή νοσηλευτική φροντίδα για τους κατοίκους. Η ίδρυση των πρώτων δομών υγείας επιτεύχθηκε με την παραχώρηση της κυριαρχίας του νησιού από τους Βρετανούς. Το επάγγελμα Νοσηλευτικής ιδρύθηκε επίσημα στην Κύπρο το 1951 με τον Περί Νοσηλευτικής και Μαιευτικής Νόμο του 1951. Παρά την παρουσία πλειάδας Αγγλίδων νοσηλευτριών στα νοσοκομεία της Κύπρου σχεδόν καθ όλη τη διάρκεια της Αγγλικής κατοχής, αλλά και την αποστολή αρκετών Κυπρίων νεαρών κοριτσιών στο εξωτερικό για σπουδές, ο νοσηλευτικός κλάδος δεν επαρκούσε να καλύψει τις ανάγκες του πληθυσμού.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Κύπρος, Ιστορική Ανάπτυξη, Τουρκοκρατία, Αγγλοκρατία, Νοσηλευτική, Νοσηλευτής/τρια, Νοσοκόμος/α και συνδυασμός αυτών.

1. Introduction

Nursing in Cyprus was officially established as a profession in 1951, under «The Nursing and Midwifery Law, 1951» during the colonial domination, almost one hundred years after Florence Nightingale founded the scientific basis of the nurse vocation (TCG 1951; Tornarites 1959).

Nursing and mainly the need for health care has existed since the beginning of mankind. It could be said that nursing for several centuries in the history of mankind, was an abstraction among family, charity, religion (pagan and otherwise), magic, folk medicine, and finally in Western medicine, as it was developed as a science several centuries late.

Health care providers were present in all cultures, ancient or not. However, the term nurse was not mentioned until the 19th century. Based on the recorded history of ancient civilizations it can be concluded that there is partial knowledge about health providers and the latter can definitely be consider as the original nurses or first level nurses, that is the non-scientific role of the mother and care provided by members family, neighbours and friends (Mellish 1984).

Regarding the ancient history of the island, the first reference for nurses, was the existence of a copper plate in the temple of Athena of Dali, now in the Louvre, which states that the known military doctor Onasilos of Dali (5th century BC) during operations he performed he was reportedly accepting accept help from his two brothers, who unlike Onasilo were not mentioned as doctors, so probably they were nurses (Loucaides 1953).

J.M. Mellish (1984) in her book mentions the following concerning the history of nursing: «In this life nothing is in limbo, everything and everyone is related in some way to the past, which also has an influence on the future». For nurses, the knowledge of the history of their art is crucial in order to understand their science and the health care system as a whole as well.

The necessity of this article arouses from the lack of similar studies concerning the development of health professions, and especially nursing, in Cyprus.

2. Methodology

For the purpose of our research it has been used methodology of historical research using primary, secondary and tertiary sources through systematic review of domestic and international literature and online searching has been used. Specifically, the entire search included: history books, Cypriot medical encyclopaedias, previous research papers, colonial government publications - The Cyprus Civil List, Blue Books (1887-1894) and The Cyprus Gazette - TCG (1878-1959).

Historical research is defined as the collection, evaluation and analysis of successive events of the past, a process that may be useful for the study and understanding of behaviours in the present and the prediction of them in the future (Polit & Beck 2004). The study of the primary sources was conducted by a systematic review by chronology and parallel coupling of the data collected at a later stage from the secondary and tertiary sources.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Ottoman Period (1571 AC - 1878 AC)

The Ottoman period started in 1571 when the Ottomans Turks invaded the island. Prior to that period the island was under Venetian domination (Tzermias 2001). Throughout the period of the Ottoman Occupation the island of Cyprus had a complete lack of sufficient care system. As a consequence, health care facilities could not be developed nor functioned properly (Vryonidou-Giagkou et al., 2006).

After the year 1839, which is the year that various legislative reforms held throughout the Ottoman Empire, also known as post-tanzimat period, sources mention the existence of a military hospital in Nicosia, but with no reference to its operation. At that period of time, this was the only hospital on the island. Some of the legislations reforms in the Ottoman Empire during the post-tanzimat period had to do with the establishment of codes and legislations that included provisions relating to the regulation of the medical profession (Georgiades 1995; 2001).

Concerning the Public Health Situation in Cyprus during the Ottoman years, various British individuals, British administrators and various foreign travellers remained stunned by the situation and absence of public health measures that the Ottoman Administration never applied. A traveller in the island during the period 18941913, named Magda Ohneflash-Righter, in her book, points out the total lack of public medical infrastructure and also mentions the unsanitary condition in the cities (Vryonidou-Giagkou et al., 2006).

According to Ohneflash - Righter streets were filled with piles of rotting bones, foods and countless stray dogs. She also describes that within the courtyards of the churches and the mosques one was able to see flat graves of rotting human corpses. (Ohnefalsch - Righter 1994) Some British administrators, like Sir Garnet Wolse ley (Cavendish 1991), and other British medical officers, like William Steele, W.H. McNamara and Frederick Charles Heidenstam, in addition to the human waste and impurities in the cities and the unsanitary conditions, they report infectious diseases that decimate the population, such as cholera and malaria (Vryonidou - Giagkou et al. 2006; Georgiades 2001; McNamara 1879).

During the mid-19th century, Christian and Muslim inhabitants gradually began to understand the need for institutionalization measures which would protect them from various epidemics. After the conduction of various fundraisers from the local population and the church, Quarantines, also known as Lazareta, were established near the ports of Larnaca and Limassol to control and limit outbreaks transmitted by ships directed to the port city (Michaelides 2010; Maragkou & Kolotas 2006).

Regarding another scourge of that time, leprosy, probably appeared in Cyprus in 1600 AD transmitted by Palestinian pilgrims (Heidenstam 1890). The Ottoman Governor was irritated by lepers congregating inside and outside the Nicosia City walls, ordered their extermination. As a result, the Dragoman, who wished to save them, donated 500 acres of land 2-3 miles away from the city, so a leper colony would be established in the area called "Agia Paraskevi", (Hatton Richards 1903; Sevasly 1914). The expensed of the construction of the building in the leprosy farm were undertaken by the Turkish Administration and the cost of feeding and clothing was undertaken by the Church (Filippou 1975; Papadopoulou 1929).

In 1844 a private hospital was established, in the infirmary, at the Nuns' House in Larnaca, from the initiative of French nationals and funded by the French Government. The main physician was Josef Irene Foblant and with the assistance of Nuns from the Franciscans order with hospital expertise accepted patients on a daily basis for examination and treatment (Vryonidou-Giagkou et al., 2006; Michaelides 2010; Bonat et al., 2007; Kyriazis 2011).

3.2. British Period (1878 AC - 1960 AC)

On July 7, 1878, a firman (permit) was signed by the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Hamid II that passed the administration of Cyprus to the British. The British arrived on the island on July 22 of the same year (Tzermias 2001; Mallinson 2011).

Following the occupation of Cyprus by the British in 1878, the British Administration launched the first infrastructures and measures to protect the population's health. At first, British military physicians, who were appointed on the 6 provinces of the island, were temporarily ceded (Vryonidou-Giagkou et al., 2006; Georgiades 1995; Cavendish 1991). At the same period, the Colonial Government established pharmacies/dispensaries for the examination of patients and medication administration. The first outpatient dispensary was established in 1878 in an area adjacent to the old Turkish Military Hospital in Nicosia. By the following year, 1879, dispensaries were founded in all the districts of the island, Limassol, Kyre- nia, Larnaca, Famagusta and Paphos. In 1897 the branch of the Colonial Nursing Association was founded. By 1901 the 23rd year of the colonial occupation-hospitals were founded in the six provinces of the island (Georgia- des 1995; Hatton Richards 1932; Pavlakis & Zachariadou 2011; TCG 1882; Mitsinga 2005; Hutchinson & Cobham 1907).

From 1891 sources indicate that Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots nurses were working in the hospitals. Moreover, in 1892 the first British nurses were appointed in Nicosia General Hospital (Pavlakis & Zachariadou 2011; Georgiades 2001).

According to the colonial government publications, in the "nursing staff specialties" that worked in the hospitals were the following:

Matron or Head Nurse:she stayed in the hospital and was responsible for the internal matters of the hospital, under

the instructions of the Chief Medical Officer. Besides, her nursing duties, she was responsible for all the staff working in the hospital; she was also responsible for the proper care and cleanness of the building, the beds, the linens and all the equipment used by the patients. She also had to supervise the preparation and the distribution of food. Under no circumstances she could find accommodation at night outside the hospital without the approval of the Chief Medical Officer. Daily the Head Nurse had to check up each patient of the hospital and hear any complains. She also accompanied the doctors' rounds and during an emergency she was responsible until the arrival of the Chief Medical Officer (Heidenstam 1903).

Sister Nurse and Staff Nurse: They were obedient to the Head Nurse and were not entitled to be absent from the hospital unless they were given permission by the head nurse. Under the supervision of the head nurse, they were responsible for the care and cleanliness of the patients; they accompanied doctors on medical visits and provided all the necessary information about their patients. To add to the previous, they oversaw that there were no visitors at booths outside the predefined hours, they distributed food to the wards and supervised that patients did not give nor take any kind of food outside of the predetermined. They were also responsible for collecting all the food from the chambers after the predefined mealtimes. Finally, they distributed medication at the predetermined time, as required by the Chief Medical Officer (Heidenstam 1903).

Attendants and Orderlies: Also known as "Carers of the compartments", under the supervision of the head nurse, they were responsible for the cleanliness of the rooms, corridors, toilets, baths and other areas of the hospital. They also had to illuminate the wards and hospital rest rooms. Also they were performing debts concierge (door porters) and maintained order among outpatients entering the Outpatient Clinic - Pharmacy (dispensary). They provided care to the sick and performed nursing duties and any other kind of tasks, under the order of the Chief Medical Officer. Their work would be settled in such a way that there were always caregivers in the hospital (day and night) (Heidenstam 1903).

In the Medical and Sanitary Report of 1933, it was highlighted that it was observed a difficulty in finding suitable girls to work and be trained in nursing at Nicosia General Hospital, because those who applied were girls «of very poor quality». On the other hand, the report states that "the new Cypriot women may become very efficient in nursing and administration, and tangible evidence is the fact that the Larnaca Hopsital is staffed exclusively by them (Georgiades 2001; Mitsinga 2005; TCG 1933).

The year of 1935 was a milestone for the nursing education on the island. The colonial government implemented a new tactic. Young Cypriot girls that graduated from High School were sent to Beirut's' University Nursing School. The first girls sent were: Nina Christou Kallipeti, Iris Schiza and Turkan Aziz (Mitsinga 2005; TCG 1935).

In 1936, the new Director of Medical Services, Dr. E.A. Neff, submitted a plan for the reorganization of the Medical Department. In his report she mentions the Cypriot nurses are considered as intellectually poor, the government provides them with food, lodging and uniforms. He also stated that their salaries are too high and he considered reducing them. The whole scheme of reforming the Nursing Department came to force when the girls that had undertaken training in Beirut assumed duties. Also, the institution of the practical nurse was maintained. However, two classes were created for newly appointment nurses, lower and upper level (Neff 1936; TCG 1936).

Another milestone year for the education of Cypriots nurses was in 1947. During that year, two young Cypriots and a young girl were sent for training in General Nursing at St. Ebbas Hospital in Epsom, Surry, England. Additionally, two other Cypriot girls were sent with a scholarship for training in General Nursing at London's Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Vryonidou-Giagkou et al., 2006; Georgia- des 2001; Mitsinga 2005).

The colonial government announced plans to grant four scholarships to young Cypriots for four years studies in the General Nursing in the United Kingdom. Among others, the report stated that the candidates should be between 18 and 30 years old; possess a high school diploma and proficiency in the English language. The candidate would have to pass a medical examination and then work at Nicosia Hospital trial for a period of six months to examine the "adequacy» (aptitude) of them on Comprehensive Nursing. During that period, mental health nurses started to be trained in United Kingdom (Pavlakis & Zach- ariadou 2011; TCG 1947).

In the years followed in 1947, the Colonial Government announced more scholarships in studies in United Kingdom, in general nursing, tuberculosis and psychiatric nursing. Particularly during the period from 1948 to1954 more than 90 scholarships for four year studies in general nursing were granted, 1 scholarship for three years study in psychiatric nursing and more than 45 scholarshipsin two year studies in tuberculosis. The graduates fromthe 4-year nursing studies in England, upon their ret urn oe the island, replaced the British senior nurses (TCG 1948; 1949; 1950; 1952; 1953; 1954; Mitsinga 2005).

The Nursing School of Cyprus was first established in 1945 in the island's capital, Nicosia, which provided 2-year diploma for assistant nurses. In March 1946, Mrs Berta Elizabeth Walter was appointed as a sister nurse and trainer (Sister Tutor) and later followed by Mrs Clementine Shelish. The first government examination for assistants nurses held in 1948 (Pavlakis & Zachariadou 2011; TCG 1948).

Another very important year for the Nursing School of Nicosia, was in 1954, when the World Health Organization, sent two deligates to improve the Nursing School programmes (Vryonidou-Giagkou et al., 2006; Pavlakis & Zachariadou 2011). The two deligates were, Miss Mango and Miss Burke, whereas the two-year programme for assistant nurses upgraded to a three-year programme of General Nursing in English Language, and their graduates could register as Cypriot Registered Nurses under the provision of the Nursing and Midwifery Law of 1951 (TCG 1951; Tornarites 1959; Mitsinga 2005).

A crucial point for the development of the Nursing School in Cyprus was 1960, when the School acquired a new building which was built by Nuffield Institution. The inauguration took place in January of 1960 from the Duchess Mountbatten. For the following years the Nufield Institution, Mountbatten Trust and Unisef offered books for the students of the school (Pavlakis & Zachariadou 2011;Mitsinga 2005).

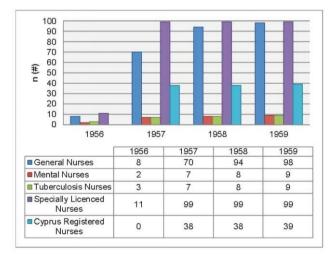
Throughout the British Rule in Cyprus, many legislations and statutes were established concerning the protection of Public Health (Tornarites 1959). Specifically, laws were regulated for the Quarantine, Disease Prevention, Burials, Medical Relief, Pharmacy, Medical Registration; Public Health etc. (TCG 1879; 1883; 1896; 1899; 1900; 1917; 1930). In 1932, the Midwifery Law was established, that regulated the practice of midwifery in the island and provided the establishment of a registration council. In 1951, the Nursing and Midwifery Law was established, which

was incorporated with the Midwifery Law of 1932. This law regulated the practice of nursing and midwifery in Cyprus. Additionally, a registration council was established, and for anyone who wished to practice nursing or midwifery in Cyprus s/he had to be registered to the council.

The law also stated the terms of: the general nurse, the psychiatric nurse, the tuberculosis nurse and the staff nurse (TCG 1932; 1951).

From 1956 until 1959 the register of registered nurses who were entitled to pursue the profession of nurse in Cyprus were published in the colonial government publications. In 1956 there were 24 registered nurses while in 1957 the number of the registered nurses rose to 221, then in 1958 there were 247 registered nurses and finally in 1959 the number of registered nurses rose to 253 (TCG 1956; 1957; 1958; 1959).

Diagram/Table 1: Sums of Nursing Specialties Registered in Cyprus for the years 1956 to 1959



4. Conclusion - Discussion

Finding primary sources regarding the institution of nursing care during the Ottoman period was inefficient. All in all, during the Ottoman rule, there was a serious lack of adequate health institutions and also health professionals on the island. Also, during that period, the Christians and Muslims of the time chose hospitalization within the bosom of their families. It is crucial to mention, the institution of folk medicine and the practice of midwifery, institutions which later the British Colonialism, expressly prohibited as one of the measures to improve the health of the inhabitants.

During the Turkish occupation of the island, there was no effective state welfare for the medical and nursing care for the inhabitants of Cyprus. The first nurses were French nuns of the homonymous monastery in Larnaca, but there is insufficient data on what their education was or their working techniques. As for the Quarantine which operated in Larnaca and Limassol, no reference is made for the medical staff or at least staff quarters working there.

Immediately after the conquest of Cyprus by England, the English Administration launched the first infrastructure and took the first steps to protect the health of residents and appointed doctors and nurses from England. Specifically, dispensaries and hospitals were founded throughout the island; several legislations relating to public health, medicine, nursing, midwifery etc. were established.

Regarding the nursing education, from 1935 the colonial government implemented a new tactic, sending inhabitants abroad for nursing studies, in Beirut amd in United Kingdom. The Nursing School of Cyprus launched its first two-year programme for assistant nurses in 1945, and by 1954 with the help of the World Health Organization the two-year programme upgraded to a three-year programme of General Nursing.

Despite the rapid development of health services during the British period in Cyprus, as it is reported by the findings of the primary sources, some sources, non-government press, reported a general discomfort of the Cypriots regarding the public health sector. Also, despite the presence of tuple Englishwoman nurses in hospitals in Cyprus almost throughout the British occupation, and sending Cypriots several young girls in the UK and in Beirut, the nursing institution was not sufficient to meet the needs of the population. Consider that in 1956, only 24 nurses worked throughout Cyprus, unlike midwives where the number of registered midwives was almost 500. By 1959 the number of registered nurses rose to 253, while the number of registered midwives amounted to 594 (TCG 1959).

However, the contribution of the English in the development of the health sector was important and thanks to this, development continued in the later years of the Republic.

Future perspectives consist of further historical research carried from 1960, independence of Cyprus in 1960, utill today, analysing important stages and milestones in the development of the nursing profession. Also, further comparative historical research can be conducted in order to compare the situation of nursing development in other countries at the same period.

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