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The profession of Nursing has taken a huge leap forward both during the time of Florence Nightingale to today's modern age. This article sheds light on the journey of nursing, from its humble roots to Nightingale's contributions and the various breakthroughs of the present along with a focus on the pros and cons as well as the strengths and weaknesses of Nursing in both Nightingale's and today's time. Various aspects in both time periods are considered in this article along with a note that emphasizes on the contemplation rather than outperformance in the field of Nursing in both time periods.

Keywords : *Nightingale's contributions, Nightingale Training School for Nurses, Crimean Fever, Hospital-acquired infections.*

In the point of view of many, nursing is just another profession among countless others. To them, a nurse is not as noble as a doctor, nor is it as humble as a housemaid. Still, to deny the significance of nursing as a profession would be denying one of the fundamental aspects of human life - caring for the sick. Albeit the profession was created rather recently, the act of caring for the sick is as old as the very first person who bought a cup of water or a piece of warm cloth for someone who is ill. This is long before the profession even existed. The practice gradually evolved through the passage of time, from primitive caregivers, such as members of the Zuni tribe of Native America where an infant was born with a part of the placenta covering the face was destined to be a caregiver. Then we know of the Christian nuns and monks who devoted their lives for the care of the sick. They opened some of the earliest hospitals, such as the Hotel-Dieu in Paris which was founded by the city's bishop in 651 A.D. (Karen, 2009). Yet, there are no standard principles or regulations to define the practice. That is until Florence Nightingale came along.

Nightingale brought with her a series of dynamic changes and improvements that still influence the field of nursing today. She did something that was unprecedented by opening the first modern school of nursing, the Nightingale Training School for Nurses within St. Thomas' Hospital in 1860, which essentially laid the foundations of modern nursing as a distinct

discipline. For the first time in history, nursing was a profession in its own right. In the Crimean War, at the Selimiye Barracks in Scutari (modern-day Üsküdar in Istanbul), Nightingale herself spent every waking minute caring for the soldiers. In the evenings she moved through the dark hallways carrying a lamp while making her rounds, ministering to patient after patient. The soldiers, who were both moved and comforted by her endless supply of compassion, took to calling her "the Lady with the Lamp." Others simply called her "the Angel of the Crimea". Stephen Paget in the *Dictionary of National Biography* asserted that Nightingale reduced the death rate from 42% to 2%, either by making improvements in hygiene herself or by calling for the Sanitary Commission (Florence Nightingale 2015). Based on her observations in the Crimea, Nightingale wrote *Notes on Matters Affecting the Health, Efficiency and Hospital Administration of the British Army*, an 830-page report analyzing her experience and proposing reforms for other military hospitals operating under poor conditions. The book would spark a total restructuring of the War Office's administrative department, including the establishment of a Royal Commission for the Health of the Army in 1857 (Biography, 2015).

During Nightingale's time, nursing was a noble and spiritual profession, a trait inherited from the nuns and was further bolstered by her own actions in Crimea. Eager to follow her example, even women from the

wealthy upper classes started enrolling at the training school (Biography 2015). Most people who chose this profession did so out of a strong sense of passion, love, and compassion for the sick and the desire to provide them with care and comfort, once again mirroring the nuns and Nightingale herself. The matter of income and comfortability did not mean that much to them, and the work environment is still deplorable despite having improved by leaps and bounds through Nightingale's efforts. The situation has improved in the case of sanitation, such as the threat of acquiring nosocomial infections, otherwise known as hospital-acquired infections still being much greater than today, something that even the great Nightingale could not escape from, as she contracted Crimean Fever while serving in Scutari (Biography 2015). As repugnant as these conditions may seem to today's nurses, they pale in comparison with the intense passion and interest that were shared among most of the nurses during Florence Nightingale's days. At that time, Nightingale's "Notes On Nursing" was the guideline for the practice of nursing and her qualities as an administrator, spiritualist, politician, statistician, environmentalist, intellectual and above all a hands-on caregiver were an inspiration to all who followed in her footsteps to become a professional nurse.

In the modern age, nursing has evolved far from its roots of compassion and spirituality. Aside from being the branch of healthcare with the largest number of personnel, nursing has also been "modernized". Nurses nowadays are trained with an emphasis to be independent, competent, resourceful and efficient in their profession, even more so than the nurses in Nightingale's days. While this isn't a bad thing entirely, the qualities of love, compassion, care, and dedication, that so strongly represent the profession are largely left out or overlooked by most of the nurses today. Along with this, in today's time, there are increasing number of hospitals that fall under the influence of business-oriented corporations, whereby most of them turn away from treating healthcare as a form of service to the community and emphasize on profitability. As a result, the underprivileged are increasingly being denied from seeking and obtaining the quality healthcare that everyone deserves, something that Nightingale would surely frown upon.

In stark contrast with the of Nightingale's time,

most nurses today are chiefly drawn to the amount of pay rather than passion, especially in the European countries where the pay is substantially higher. Although it is undeniably true that today's nursing has gone a long way ahead in terms of knowledge and expertise, with the development of numerous nursing theories from nurse scholars such as Martha Rogers, Hildegard Peplau, and Dorothy Orem. Prior to them the frameworks for research were often "borrowed" from other disciplines (Karen 2009, p. 22), along with a truly diverse scope of choices, such as registered nurses to community health nurses and nurse practitioners who could perform primary care functions that were traditionally performed by physicians. Nurses perform all these duties at a lower cost but most of them lacked the zeal that was prevalent among the nurses of Nightingale's time.

Modern nursing through the perspective of Florence Nightingale, or rather if she is a patient on a contemporary ward, she might be embarrassed by the proximity of the other patients in the four-bed bay. This present system lacks privacy as the Nightingale wards, as she would be unable to monitor the whereabouts of the nurses from her bed, especially the ward sister, who doesn't seem to do a round of the patients. She would be having difficulty to know who was responsible for what among the nurses and horrified at having to ask for a bedpan, rather than being offered one. As well as bemused that student nurses receive half their 'education' at the local university, and that ward cleaning is 'contracted out' and beyond the ward sister's control (In Nightingale's time the ward maid came to be a highly valued member of the ward teams). Most of all, she would be distressed by the noise, the chatter and the bustle throughout the day, and sometimes at night (Stockwell, 2010).

Ironically, even though Nightingale strived to model the practice of nursing into a noble and dignified profession that is well balanced in professionalism and compassion, she also unwittingly bequeathed a legacy whereby most people from developing countries consider nursing to be a lowly occupation that is synonymous with only cleaning a patient's wounds, bodily fluids and excrements which along with the nurse's uniform. During her time nurses were treated as hospital-maids in white or sometimes pink dresses and caps as well as being considered to be subordinate and

were overshadowed by doctors. Moreover, Nightingale herself saw that nursing could offer women a meaningful life, which would provide them with a channel for their Christian virtues, their motherly nature and their natural intellect (Stockwell, 2010). p.5. This has led to the gender stereotype of nursing as a profession that is exclusive for women only and which still haunts the profession to this day, to an extent that it slowed its progress and development.

All in all, the nursing profession of today has both taken a step forward as well as a step backward, the same can also be said during Nightingale's time. Back then the nurses were deeply passionate and willing to

care for the sick, but shortages in comprehending the anatomy and physiology of the human body and advancements in medical technology limited their capabilities. Meanwhile, despite having a significant amount of expertise and understanding, most nurses today lack the profound sense of love and compassion of their predecessors. In a sense, nursing in both time periods definitively lacked something that the other profession possessed. Fair to say, possessing a firm grasp on the practices of nursing is imperative, but so is having a heart and soul that are never too full to listen and provide care to the tragedies, difficulties, discomforts and sufferings of others.

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