

**COMPARISON OF TRAINING AND EDUCATING FUTURE NURSING PROFESSIONALS
IN THE 1930s AND 1940s IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND ABROAD**
**KOMPARÁCIA PRÍPRAVY BUDÚCICH OŠETROVATELIEK V TRIDSIATYCH
A ŠTYRIDSIATYCH ROKOCH MINULÉHO STOROČIA V ČESKOSLOVENSKU A V ZAHRANIČÍ**

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the description of the training conditions for nurses in the first Czechoslovak Republic and abroad. It describes the nursing schools of the countries of northern Europe, namely Norway, Denmark, Great Britain, France, where nursing education was of a high standard. It points out the importance of educating qualified nursing staff. It provides a summary of the requirements of pre-primary education required in nursing schools in the Czechoslovak Republic in contrast to the needs abroad.

Key words: Nursing. Nurse education and training. Nursing schools

ABSTRAKT

Štúdia sa zameriava na opis podmienok odbornej prípravy ošetrovateľiek v prvej Československej republike a v zahraničí. Popisuje ošetrovateľské školy krajín severnej Európy, Veľkej Británie a Francúzska, v ktorých bolo ošetrovateľské vzdelávanie na vysokej úrovni. Poukazuje na dôležitosť výchovy kvalifikovaného ošetrovateľského personálu. Prináša krátke zhrnutie požiadaviek predbežného vzdelania, ktoré sa vyžadovalo v ošetrovateľských školách v Československej republike v kontraste s požiadavkami v zahraničí.

Kľúčové slová: Ošetrovatelstvo. Vzdelávanie a príprava sestier. Ošetrovateľské školy

INTRODUCTION

The first Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938) (hereinafter Czechoslovakia) was established after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, after the end of the First World War. Health and social conditions of the population in the newly established Czechoslovakia were unsatisfactory in many aspects after the war. The population suffered mainly from infectious and civilization diseases, high infant mortality, alcoholism, cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Of course, medical doctors had a dominant position in the healthcare of the sick. However, substantial patient care was provided by nursing staff as well. Nursing personnel worked in hospitals, state treatment institutions, maternity hospitals, specialized treatment institutions and counselling centres. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, there was a lack of qualified

nursing staff in Czechoslovakia. Most nursing staff consisted of nuns. It was only after 1930 that qualified nurses joined hospital nursing staff [1].

The main reason of insufficient nursing care was the lack of professional training of nurses. After the establishment of Czechoslovakia, nursing profession was not given sufficient importance.

In the 1940s only 15 % of workplaces from all the hospitals and other treatment institutions located in Czechoslovakia employed fully qualified nursing staff [2]. There were about 7,700 employees who worked in hospitals and healthcare institutions who provided care to patients. Out of this number, there were approximately 650 certified nurses [3]. Prior to 1934 in Czechoslovakia there was 461 hospitals and medical institutions and the number of beds in these facilities was 72,453. The number of nursing staff gradually increased to 8,138 with 1,062 re-registered qualified nursing staff [4]. The increase in nursing personnel was caused by the foundation of nursing schools and by increasing the number of qualified graduates of nursing schools. Despite this, the aforementioned number was still insufficient, so the request to increase the number of graduated nurses to 800 per year in order to replace the unqualified staff with qualified nurses was immense. For this reason, there was the need to establish additional nursing schools in Czechoslovakia and the need for a uniform education of certified nurses [5].

AIM

The aim of the study is to describe the conditions of nursing education in Czechoslovakia and in selected European countries. Based on this description it is possible to create an idea about nursing education in Europe after the end of the World War I. The study is based on the use of the method of historical research and the processing of archive materials. For this reason, we provide several names of educational subjects or clinical workplaces in their original wording.

Conditions of nurses' education in the 1930s and 1940s in Czechoslovakia

Until 1914 there was no uniform nursing education and training in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Nurses were usually admitted to hospitals as helpers and became nurses only based on their own experience. It was only after the initiative of Austrian authorities that reforms were implemented, bringing the content of nursing education to the level of developed countries. The order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the treatment of patients of June 25, 1914, determined the establishment of nursing schools, the way of their training, duties and rights of a certified nurse. It allowed the establishment of nursing schools and, for several decades, even after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it influenced the development, existence and support of nursing education [6]. In the newly established Czechoslovakia, the license for the establishment of nursing schools was issued by the Ministry of Public Health and Physical Education based in Prague. There were around 1,000 graduates of existing nursing schools by the year 1932 in Czechoslovakia. Gradually, several nursing schools were established, which educated nurses from general public as well as nurses from religious orders.

In 1935, the training of certified nurses was provided in 4 church nursing schools: Chomutov, Bratislava, Opava, Kosice and in 3 public nursing schools: Czech Nursing School in Prague, German Nursing School in Prague, M. R. Štefánik Nursing School in Turčiansky Sv. Martin [7]. These nursing schools were founded on a uniform basis of Act no. 139/1914 Coll. Nursing schools were interconnected with a dormitory, where there were students under the direct guidance and supervision of their abbess and teachers – certified nurses. The school usually had the capacity of 25 to 60 students, except for a nursing school in Prague where up to 100 students studied. The study lasted two years. The condition for studying at a nursing school was nationality, age 20 to 30, minimum 18 years old. Pre-schooling of at least three classes of the public school was required because girls with better preparation had priority in the admission procedure. Good health, integrity and pleasant personal behaviour was necessary [8]. Article 6 of the Ministerial Decree Act no. 139/1914 Coll. explicitly defined subjects that had to constitute the content of education at a nursing school [9]. The following subjects were included in the list of compulsory subjects: human body;

organ functions; the fundamentals of general diseases, including infectious diseases; general health and hospital health; general techniques of patient treatment; practical instructions for treatment of internal diseases, surgical diseases, treatment of infants and women in postpartum period, treatment of infants, children, females, skin, contagious and mental diseases. The syllabus also included subjects such as food preparation, health regulations, basics of social care, health service in the times of war.

There was also a regulation regarding the registration of graduated nurses. Professional competences in the area of patient treatment were tested by means of a diploma exam that consisted of a theoretical and practical part. Qualified nurses had a choice of taking an oath to be available for treating patients in wars or during epidemic. After taking the oath they received an honorary badge. There was a relative freedom in education at nursing schools as a result of short existence of these institutions. So, the need to teach on a uniform basis and equally in all schools had risen. It was necessary to revise the syllabus of nursing schools and to prepare suitable textbooks.

At that time nursing schools lacked suitable textbooks from which students could learn. Discussions on the revision of curricula and the creation of new textbooks for nurses in Czechoslovakia were the subject of several working meetings of nursing schools' principals: in Prague, 1934; in Chomutov, 1935; in Opava; in Turčiansky sv. Martin, 1937 [10].

The first year of education focused on theory and nursing techniques. The education included lectures on anatomy, physiology, hygiene, pathology. In the second year, practical training predominated, especially in hospitals. In the curriculum, no attention was paid to the official language, but the subject of physical education was included in it. A novelty was the need for typing skills and food expertise. Cooking was a complementary subject to the theory of dietetics. From a practical point of view, it was also necessary to introduce information exercises in social work in order to create the balance between patients' bedside service and patients' environment [11]. The Latin language as a basis for acquiring special medical terminology was not introduced into the curriculum until the early 1950s [12]. Excursions were to be a part of education and training.

The unification of educational conditions became the subject of meetings at international level

such as the requirement of general education and advanced training for future nurses was different in European countries. The difference was, for example, in the conditions of students' admission to nursing schools, in the requirement of their prior education, in the age of admission to nursing schools, etc. The International Nursing Council, which held a World Congress in Paris in 1934 [13], discussed the need for unification in the Educational Section of the conference.

Based on the information from archival sources from the 1930s and 1940s, it is possible to describe the conditions and process of nursing education at nursing schools in Europe. Nursing schools in the Northern European countries, Great Britain and France are a good example of how to compare training conditions of future nurses.

Nursing School at the City Hospital in Oslo, Norway

In Oslo, there was the largest nursing school in Norway, founded by the City Hospital in 1887. 300 students attended the school and it took three years to graduate. This school provided general training and the minimum age for enrolling was 20, but not older than 30. The study was subject to a fee and for the first 4 months of training, the students paid 200 Norwegian kroner. Four months were a probationary period during which they attended lectures and theoretical explanations and worked for a few hours a day in the hospital. At the end of the four-month period, the students received a uniform and were assigned directly to the hospital wards where they worked under the supervision of certified nurses.

The emphasis of the education was placed on theoretical training of nurses. Lectures were given equally throughout the study, with subjects such as anatomy, hygiene, chemistry, ethics, and nursing history in the first year. Each subject was completed by a written examination. After finishing the probation period, the students worked in hospital rooms in the internal ward, surgery and in the last two years in the ward of chronic diseases, tuberculosis, psychiatry, internal ward, surgery and gynaecology, operating room or labour ward.

In addition to their practice in the first year of their studies, the students received theoretical training in subjects such as pharmacology, nursing of internal diseases, surgical diseases, and children diseases.

In the second year, the lectures included subjects such as nutrition and dietetics, tuberculosis, infectious diseases, urine analysis, basics of psychology, psychiatry and treatment of mentally ill patients.

In the third year, lectures on first aid, hygiene, family care, ethics, anaesthesia were included in the education. Every year approximately 100 qualified nurses completed education at nursing school.

Education of nurses in Denmark

In Denmark, nurses were united in Dansk Sygeplejerat – Kobenhagen organisation, while at the same time most nurses were trained in theory and practice. There were about 110 smaller nursing schools in Denmark, which was more than in Czechoslovakia. However, there was no state regulation to determine the rules for schools to be run and organized.

Every school therefore educated nurses according to their own principles. Dansk Sygeplejerat supervised if the education complied with the directive issued by the International Nursing Council. The education in all nursing schools in Denmark lasted for three years. The recruiting candidates were from 20 to 26 years old, because hospitals recruited nurses up to the age of 32. General education lasting at least 8 years was required before the students could start undergraduate study. There were many graduates among the candidates for nursing education. The trial period was two months and during the first six weeks the theoretical preparation was completed with oral and practical examinations. The lectures included subjects such as anatomy, hygiene, bacteriology, nursing technology, diet cooking, food science, chemistry and pharmacology, ethics and exercise. Practical training took place in hospital wards specializing in internal diseases, surgery, gynaecology, a maternity ward, a paediatric ward and an operating room, except for the infectious ward where students could qualify only after graduation. In the second year, surgery and internal disease lectures were given, but the exams were not taken. In the third year, theoretical training in gynaecology, ear-throat and throat diseases and childcare took place. Similarly to Norway, studies were paid for. The fee of 70 Danish kroner was paid for the probationary period and during the first five months the students did not receive any salary [14].

Nursing School at Middlesex Hospital in London, UK

The nursing school at Middlesex Hospital in London accepted 100 students who were first enrolled into a preliminary nursing course. The required age of students was 19 to 32. The fee for this course was approximately CZK 1,500. The candidates had to introduce and present themselves to the abbess, and if this interview was successful, they were directly subjected to a medical examination. Successful candidates entered a previously mentioned three-month course, after which they had to take the exams of the subject studied.

During the course, the candidates were constantly supervised by the abbess. They had to comply with all regulations concerning nursing staff. They had to buy the uniforms themselves. As in Czechoslovak nursing schools, they had to keep their rooms tidy and do housework. The students procured books and materials at their own expense.

If the students successfully passed final examination, there was a three-month probationary period in hospital wards. After the probationary period, the student could submit a certificate of her health, a recommendation from the abbess and a written promise that she would attend the nursing programme for the next 4 years, to the hospital management.

After the first year, the exams consisted of anatomy, physiology, hygiene and the basics of nursing technology. In the second year, the students were tested in a hospital, treating patients of gynaecology and surgery. Before the end of the third year, nurses were recommended to take state examinations in all subjects of the 2nd and 3rd year, so that they could spend the entire fourth year practising in an operating room, X-ray and other wards. Already during the fourth year the future nurses could work in hospital. At the end of their studies, the graduates were awarded a certificate and, if they stayed in the hospital for the fifth year, they obtained a university diploma, thanks to which they could become nurses [15].

Nursing school at Neuilly-sur-Seine, France

Neuilly Hospital in Paris was set up by the United States for its citizens. It was a modern, privately owned hospital. The nursing staff consisted of a superior/abbess who had two assistants and 6 hospital nurses, each of whom was responsible for one ward. Another 13 nurses were divided into other

wards. For training needs, the hospital had its own school, one of the best nursing schools in Europe.

It took three years to complete undergraduate study which was similar to the one in the United States. The nurses were predominantly of American origin or the members of northern European countries, where there was nursing generally at a high professional level. The probation period lasted 6 months and after its successful completion a student could start a nursing school for three years. Even though the hospital and its nursing staff were trained, this nursing school was closed as a result of the foundation of special hospitals after several years of operation. This was mainly due to the fact that external French doctors did not like working with nursing school students. In addition, the hospital was affected by a regulation requiring at least 40 % of French nurses to be employed, even though the hospital was sponsored by the United States of America. The hospital therefore had great difficulty in employing English-speaking nurses, even though their salary conditions were better than in any other French hospital [16].

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the 20th century nursing was not a socially accepted profession. Professionally educated and qualified nurses were not required in the health and social system. The situation began to change in the 1930s and 1940s when poor health and social conditions of the population, not only in Czechoslovakia, required professional nursing care. The number of newly established nursing schools increased in response to the increased need for qualified certified nurses in clinical practice. Nurses were required to be trained and able to provide qualified nursing care. Nursing as a profession began to be perceived socially as a desirable profession, which required professional education at nursing schools. The aim of nursing schools in Europe was to educate certified nurses so that they would be able to work in different types of health care facilities, such as hospitals, treatment institutions, maternity hospitals and counselling centres.

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