Evolution of Nursing Education in Portugal—
a historical analysis of the Nursing School at the
Hospital Geral de Santo António in Porto (1896-1947)

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Abstract

The present study seeks to analyze the historical evolution of nursing education at the Hospital Geral de Santo António in Porto, during the period from the creation of the Nursing School in 1896 to the curricular standardization of nursing education in Portugal, introduced in 1947 by Decree-Law No. 36219.

Using a qualitative methodology, this historical analysis of original documentation (the reports of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia do Porto and the statutes of the Nursing School) revealed a constant scientific updating of both the medical discipline and the concept of healthcare in Portuguese hospitals. A link is also established between the development of the medical profession and that of nursing and ancillary staff as a relevant factor for achieving the aim of improving the quality of care provided.

The Nursing School was therefore created, based on the provision of training in medical treatment, the application of dressings, and the concepts of sepsis and antisepsis. In 1935, the course was reformulated and, under its new statutes, theoretical and practical disciplines were given a major role.

Finally, in 1947, at the initiative of the government, the nursing curriculum was standardized throughout the whole of the national territory, thereby initiating a new phase in its existence.

In this way, this Nursing School embarked upon a process of professional accreditation, forming more demanding curricula and responding to the constant needs of a changing society, of which that of the twentieth century is a good example.

Key-words

Portugal; Nursing History; Nursing Education; History of Nursing Schools; Porto Nursing School; Santa Casa da Misericórdia; Hospital Geral de Santo António.

Resumo

O estudo pretende analisar a evolução histórica do ensino de enfermagem no Hospital Geral de Santo António, no Porto, desde a criação da escola de enfermagem em 1896, até a normalização curricular do ensino de enfermagem em Portugal, datada de 1947, pelo Decreto-Lei 36.219.

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