

Nursing, a look on times of COVID-19

Enfermería, una mirada en los tiempos de COVID-19

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Dear readers,
Nursing is a profession that has always been for the service and care of populations. It has been characterized for having professionals with vocation, discipline, and dedication. To be clear, the contribution of nurses to improve the health of population in times of crisis dates back to the time of Florence Nightingale, the well-known “Lady with the Lamp”¹.

Thus, in 1928 during the catastrophic influenza pandemic, this profes-

sional group followed unswervingly the teachings of Nightingale, applying the practices of hand washing as the main measure for infection prevention¹.

In the decades that followed, the nursing staff answered the call over and over again, becoming the front-line protagonists of some recent infectious disease outbreaks throughout the world, such as H1N1 swine flu, Ebola virus, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV), and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)².

All this led nursing to be globally known for the importance it meets in all fields, so 2020 was declared the International Year of the Nursing and Midwifery, as stated at the 72nd World Health Assembly celebrated in Geneva, Switzerland, in 2019³.

However, no one expected that, in 2020, COVID-19 will be declared a pandemic, which coincidentally matches the phrase said by Florence in 1870: “the world will take 150 years to see the kind of nursing that I imagine”. It became true 150 years later, in 2020⁴.

Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed us to recognize the great work performed by the nursing staff and the importance of its existence, which is enlightening by the International Council of Nursing (ICN)⁵.

The nursing that was known has been transformed, responding to a large sanitary crisis, where it became essential the existence of a leadership capable of resolving quickly and with critical thinking each of the scenarios that might arise within health systems.

However, the number of people affected and the heavy workload, particularly expose the nursing personnel, who faces the risks associated with their work in different sectors.

Nursing requires close contact with the patients, which carries biological risks and the possibility of infection, but also a high emotional burden due to the participation in a complex healthcare environment and critical situations for patients and their families⁶.

It is valid to emphasize that management care is one of the main characteristics of this discipline, being known as the only staff in charge of patients’ needs satisfaction. This responsibility has brought multiple repercussions at the level of the mental health of the union, where stress stands out, which can trigger complex illnesses⁷.

In addition, according to the World Health Organization (WHO)⁸, nursing represents almost 50 % of the sanitary staff. Among the 43,5 million health practitioners in the world, it is estimated that 27,9 million belong to some nursing staff, and most of them (19,3 million) are professionals.

However, 50 % of the states that are WHO members report that there are less than three nursing professionals for every 1000 citizens. This ratio has been listed as a development indicator by the World Bank, which recognizes that countries like Iceland, New Zealand, and Brazil have the highest rates of nurses per population⁹.

It was in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic when the WHO made a new report, making an urgent call to invest in nursing, highlighting in a touchingly way the great role that these professionals and other health workers play to protect the well-being of the people and save lives¹⁰.

Undoubtedly, opportunities and commitment are still needed for nursing to be increasingly, taken into account in decision-making processes. This is an appropriate moment

to show all the capabilities nursing has, not only in direct care, but also in the creation of public policies, the capacity to manage resources, and the creation of valid decision-making protocols based on scientific evidence¹¹.

AUTHORSHIP

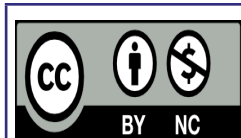
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