

EVOLUTION OF NURSING IN ALBANIA: FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO THE PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

This document explores the evolution of nursing in Albania, tracing its development from early periods to the most recent advancements. From its early beginnings to the modern era, nursing has undergone many transformations and improvements. This material covers key developments in professional training, reform efforts, and ongoing challenges faced by the profession throughout its history, including recent advancements in education and scientific research.

KEYWORDS

Nursing in Albania, professional development, healthcare reform, socialist period, democratic period, education and training, doctoral studies, academic titles, COVID-19 pandemic, vaccination, scientific research, program accreditation.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing has played a significant role in Albania's healthcare system since its early days. This document analyzes the changes and improvements that have occurred in this profession over time, including recent developments in program accreditation and advancements in scientific research.

CONTENT

NURSING IN ALBANIA BEFORE 1920

On October 21, 1854, Florence Nightingale visited the city of Shkodra and helped establish a temporary hospital for the British army, which had 4,000 wounded despite its capacity for only 1,700. Nightingale and her team of 38 nurses significantly contributed to improving healthcare conditions (Koliqi, 2003). By 1900, most Albanian nurses were specialized abroad and worked individually. This indicates early efforts towards professionalizing the sector in Albania.

LATER DEVELOPMENTS AND NURSING REFORMS

On May 14, 1919, an American Red Cross team led by Dr. Broock established a 30-bed hospital in Albania. This was a significant step in providing healthcare in the country (Maliqi, 2015). On December 30, 1921, the Albanian Red Cross (KKSH) was established, making a significant contribution to assisting the sick and the poor, led by King Zog and his sister. KKSH joined the International Red Cross Association on August 2, 1923 (Tushe, 2024). In October 1931, KKSH founded a nursing school in Tirana with 17 students studying for 3 years. This school focused on preventive medicine and hygiene and was led by an Austrian lady who had completed studies in America. At that time, Albania had 20 nurses and 24 midwives (Koliqi, 2003).

THE MONARCHY PERIOD AND ADVANCEMENTS

During the monarchy period (1930-1940), there were significant opportunities for nursing education through scholarships and studies abroad. Hospitals were opened in Tirana, Korçë, Elbasan, Vlorë, and Peshkopi, as well as dispensaries, ambulances, a psychiatric hospital, and laboratories for analysis (Shkurti, 2017).

THE WAR PERIOD AND POST-WAR IMPROVEMENTS

During World War II, Albanian nurses worked as military nurses and treated war casualties. After the war, there were improvements in Albanian nursing. In Berat, a theoretical and practical program for nursing courses was developed (Gashi, 2018).

SOCIALIST PERIOD AND REFORMS

In 1946, a nursing school was opened in Tirana with Safka Kushi as the director, who had completed higher education in Belgrade and specialized in Europe. This school offered one-year courses nationwide after 8 years of elementary and secondary education (Hoxha, 2022). In 1948, the first Medical Technical School was opened in Tirana with a 3-year program for medical assistants, later extended to 4 years. Two-year courses were established after 8 years of elementary education, focusing on basic knowledge of anatomy, physiology, hygiene, pediatric and adult diseases, and basic nursing care. The role of the nurse during this period was more humanitarian than professional (Jaku, 2023). On November 16, 1966, the first Health Conference was held, representing a significant step in the further development of healthcare professions (Hoxha, 2022). In 1980, the journal

“Kuadrot e Mesëm Mjekësor” was published, where only after 1985 did nurses start having their own publications. This was an important step in the development of research and publications in the field of nursing (Maliqi, 2015). During the period 1982-1990, a Secondary Medical School was opened in Tirana, offering a 5-year program after 8 years of elementary education and 3 years after secondary education. This program focused on training nurses and medical assistants who would contribute to the country's healthcare system (Shkurti, 2017).

THE POST-2007 PERIOD

After 2007, Albanian nursing entered a significant phase of development and improvement. In 2009, the Continuous Education Center for Nurses was established to provide opportunities for ongoing education and improvement of nurses' knowledge and skills in Albania. This sector plays an important role in supporting professional training and advancing knowledge in line with international standards (Miller, 2018). In 2012, a major reform in nursing education was approved, with the construction and accreditation of several new study programs at the bachelor and master levels. These programs included a more advanced and standardized curriculum aimed at improving the quality of nursing education (Rama, 2020). In 2015, an online platform was created to facilitate the registration and licensing of nurses, improving administrative processes and providing a centralized system for managing information about healthcare professionals (Shkurti, 2017).

DOCTORATES AND SCIENTIFIC TITLES

In recent years, doctoral studies and academic titles have gained significant importance in the development of the nursing profession in Albania. Doctoral programs in nursing have been established to promote research and development of scientific knowledge in this field. In 2020, the University of Medicine Tirana offered a doctoral program in Nursing, aiming to train specialists and academics who can contribute to advancing healthcare practices and policies in the country (Jaku, 2023). In 2022, several research institutes specializing in nursing were established at various universities in Albania, aiming to support research in various fields of nursing, including intensive care, chronic disease management, and

patient education. These institutes have helped in raising standards and advancing professional practices (Gashi, 2018).

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

Accreditation of nursing programs has become a major focus in efforts to ensure high quality and standards in education and professional training. In 2019, a group of independent experts from the Ministry of Education and Sport, as well as international organizations, conducted a detailed accreditation process for nursing programs at all higher education institutions in Albania. This process included evaluating curricula, teaching structures, and clinical practice standards, and was a significant step in ensuring that programs meet international standards (Jaku, 2023).

NURSES' CONTRIBUTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Albanian nurses played an extraordinary role in managing the health crisis. They contributed to patient care, population vaccination, and management of emergency situations. Nurses were at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic, facing significant challenges and providing crucial support to the healthcare system. They were engaged in educating patients about protective measures and assisted in vaccine administration, contributing to efforts to curb the spread of the virus and protect public health (Miller, 2018).

ALBANIA'S RESPONSE FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: HEALTHCARE CAPACITIES AND THE ROLE OF NURSES

1. **Healthcare in Albania and International Assistance** Today, Albania, with its developed and improved healthcare capacities, offers services not only to its citizens but also to individuals from other countries. Many healthcare institutions in the country are equipped to provide specialized care and other services that attract patients from different places.
2. **Attraction of Qualified Nurses** An important factor in this context is the commitment and dedication of Albanian nurses, who are well-trained and

qualified to provide high-level healthcare. Albanian nurses are recognized and valued for their skills, and many of them are engaged in healthcare institutions abroad. This is evidence of the high level of education and professional preparation they have received in Albania.

3. **Free Movement and Emigration Opportunities** Free movement and regulated emigration opportunities have improved the prospects for Albanian nurses to contribute to healthcare systems in other countries. This process has resulted in a flow of qualified professionals who help meet the healthcare needs of other populations and also contribute to improving the quality of global healthcare.
4. **International Assistance and Cooperation** Albania's involvement in providing healthcare and exporting knowledge and professional skills has contributed to international aid and support. Cooperation with foreign organizations and institutions has strengthened international ties and helped in the further development of the healthcare field in Albania and beyond.

CONCLUSION The history of nursing in Albania is a rich and complex journey reflecting ongoing efforts for improvement and modernization. From early periods of aid and international support to modern developments in education and professional training, Albanian nurses have made significant progress. However, various challenges remain that require continued efforts for improvement and advancement in this vital profession.

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