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Nursing Undergraduate Program celebrates 80 years – the building of a legacy

The Hospital São Paulo Nursing School, currently, the Paulista Nursing School (EPE), was founded in 1939 in a collaboration between Paulista Medical School (EPM) and Archdiocese of Sao Paulo upon arrival in Brazil of diplomate French nurses from Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.⁽¹⁾ The history of EPE is confounded with history of nursing profession itself because although Nightingale model or modern nursing was already presented at that time, especially due to advances related to the sanitary reform, nurses courses, at that time, were scarce and strongly influenced by religious education provided Holy Houses of Mercy.⁽¹⁾

Despite strong religious influence that can be seen in the slogan of the program *Non vivere nisi ad serviendum* (not to live but to serve) which remained up to 2007,⁽²⁾ the nursing program was created to allow and guarantee the quality care in the Hospital Sao Paulo, which was recently founded at that time. The teaching hospital of EPM was founded with the purpose to educate professionals in the model adopted by the Nursing School Anna Nery (EEAN).⁽²⁻⁴⁾ Regulations were elaborated in agreement with regulation nº 20.109 from June 15, 1931,^(1,5) which regulates conditions to recognize diploma from nursing school in Brazil, and these regulations have as requisites to be directed by diplomate nurses, nursing content and supervision of practical activities done by nurses, in addition to admission criteria and organization of curriculum of EEAN.⁽⁵⁾

The EPE was the first nursing school in São Paulo and, at that time, one of the 10 that existed in Brazil.^(1,3,4) The course's curriculum of Hospital Sao Paulo Nursing School was based on the Nightingale's model, focused on hospital environment and healing in medical practice, followed by expansion of hospitals network, in addition to curriculum model of EEAN that was based on North American Standard Curriculum for Nursing School, without any adaptation to the national reality.⁽¹⁾

At that time the course had 4,200 hours, and 12 hours of daily activities including theoretical and theoretical-practice classes done in medical school building and practical activities in the Hospital Sao Paulo, where all care activities occurred 24 hours a day with supervision of the religious nurses. The course duration was 3-years and counted with faculty from clinical and basic science areas from EPM and religious nurses.^(2,3)

Classes started in March 15, 1939 and, in the end of the same year, the director of EEAN, indicated by the Ministry of Education, did the first inspection to certify the course. One of the requirement was that the responsible religious nurses, sister Marie Domineuc, sister Maria Hermana José and

sister Maria de Fontenelle, whom graduated in Paris Nursing School, to revalidate their diplomas by taking the required national exams. In 1941, after 2 years of functioning, in a new visit for inspection, the definitive recognition was obtained on April 1, 1942 with publication of decree nº 9.101 of March 24, 1942.^(2,3)

The direction of Hospital Sao Paulo Nursing School was conducted by Madre Maria das Dores, graduated at EEAN, from 1939 to 1944. Later, when she left office, another religious nurse served as director until 1976. After that, the first secular director, the nurse Esmeralda Augusto, took office.

The direction of Hospital Sao Paulo nursing department was done by Sister Marie Domineuc between 1937 and 1947,^(2,3) along with other sisters from Franciscan Missionaries of Mary who remained in nursing service of Hospital Sao Paulo until 1970, when direction becomes secular and it was assumed by a nurse who graduated in EPE's program.^(2,3) At that time, these leaders were completely engaged and dedicated, not only to build the nursing course program, but also for development of nurse profession in Brazil. This involvement was seen by their active participation in national and international foundations and organizations related with nursing professional, events and meeting at nursing schools, in addition to associations organized by colleagues from the Hospital Sao Paulo Nursing School.

In 1949 with law nº 775 of August 6, the curriculum of the course changed. This change strengthen clinical model and hospital care, and excluded from course' content, the disciplines public health nurse and social science, however, they became elective. In 1962, the course was recognized as higher education course based on legal report nº 271/62 of Federal Education Council. In 1968, the Hospital Sao Paulo Nursing School became the Paulista Nursing School, and in 1977 the school became part of federal higher education public system and was also incorporated to the department of the Paulista Medical School.^(1,4)

In 1968 with national reform and expansion of higher education system, the EPE was organized into departments and in 1972, by the legal report nº 163/72 issued by Federal Education Council and the resolution nº 4/72, the course curriculum was updated. The course was developed based on three components, pre-professional, including a common professional department and habilitations, however, the activities in the hospital were maintained.⁽¹⁾

In the 80s, because of new federal constitution in Brazil, the creation of the Public Health System and Organic Health Law, the nursing schools made efforts to change their curricula. Therefore, the nursing school conducted surveys and studies on epidemiologic profile of population, as well as profile and desiring competences for those participating in the course. The proposal was that the course to be developed within 4 years, total hours of 4,540h. Changes were approved and authorized by the legal report nº 388 from 1983.⁽¹⁾

In the 90s the advances of researches and discussions in a number of national and international spheres about terms and nursing diagnoses, as well

as, about which subjects should be included in the course, resulted in new changes in the curricula, and a minimal workload of 3,500h and duration of 4 and no more than 6 years for conclusion of the course.⁽¹⁾

In 2001, the Ministry of Education started the discussion of proposal of National Curriculum Guidelines. Such guidelines defined a set of required competences and topics to construct Pedagogical Course Projects that must be adequate to needs of population to whom health courses offer care as stated by the Federal Constitution in relation to Public Health System. These needs serve as guiding for education of human health professionals.⁽¹⁾ At that time the undergraduate course of EPE promoted and participated in large national discussions with colleagues and influencers over the requisites in the National Curriculum Guidelines and goals of nursing courses, especially by considering surroundings and adequacies to transform and update the course's curriculum.⁽¹⁾

During these years, the nursing course and EPE evolved in terms of producing and diffusing scientific knowledge by the journal *Acta Paulista de Enfermagem* and by Nursing Graduate Programs – Master and Doctoral Degrees, both with more than 30 years of existence.⁽⁶⁾ The success in follow-up the profession trends, consider national social and political scenarios are due to the strong participation of nursing school leaders and to the continuous efforts to promote reforms in the curriculum and development. Such efforts have been always supported by the mission of the course – “To delivery care based on value of humans, dignity and integrality, scientific knowledge, competence and professional skills, and also supported by ethics that requires the preparation for reflection, constructive criticism, innovation and seeking for professional self-determination”.

Today, 80 years after the foundation of the nursing program, more than 3,000 students have been graduated so far. The program is well-known for its excellence in nursing education both for its prominent role in national research and teaching in nursing and, promotion of best care practices. In addition, the program is recognized as influencer to critical thinking and commitment with health of individuals and communities.

As confirmed by the history of the nursing undergraduate program, it will continue to develop efforts to improve nursing profession and overcome challenges related with care for the patient, teaching and research in nursing.

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