

History and Evolution of Nursing

History and Evolution of Nursing

Key periods, milestones, and themes that shaped the profession

1. Ancient & Pre-Modern Foundations (c. 3000?BC – 1500?AD)

Era / Culture	Contributions to Nursing	Notable Figures / Practices
Ancient Egypt	Healing temples; caretakers assisted physicians, provided wound care and hygiene.	Temple nurses (e.g., <i>Imhotep</i> – physician?healer).
Classical Greece & Rome	Emphasis on “humoral” balance; caretakers (often slaves or family members) tended the sick.	Hippocrates’ “Hippocratic Corpus” mentions nursing duties.
Early Christianity	Monastic orders established “hospitals” (e.g., <i>Basilicas</i>). Women religious served the poor and ill.	St.?Basil the Great (founder of the first organized hospitals).
Islamic Golden Age	Advanced medical schools (e.g., Baghdad’s <i>Bimaristans</i>) with dedicated nursing staff.	Al?Razi, Ibn?Sina – wrote about patient care and hygiene.
Medieval Europe	“Hospitallers” and convents provided organized care; nursing remained a charitable, religious activity.	Order of St.?John (Knights Hospitaller).

Takeaway: Early nursing was inseparable from religious and charitable work; formal training was rare, and duties centered on basic hygiene, feeding, and comfort.

2. The Birth of Modern Nursing (19th Century)

Date	Event	Impact
1795	Establishment of the London Hospital training program for “ladies’ assistants.”	First systematic, secular training for women.

History and Evolution of Nursing

Date	Event	Impact
1854–1856	Crimean War – Florence Nightingale organizes a team of volunteer nurses.	Introduced sanitation, statistical monitoring, and the “Nightingale Ward.”
1860	Nightingale opens the Nightingale School of Nursing at St. Thomas’ Hospital.	First formal nursing curriculum; model for future schools.
1873	Mary Seacole runs the <i>British Hotel</i> for soldiers, demonstrating alternative nursing approaches.	Highlighted the importance of cultural competence and holistic care.
1885	American Nurses Association (ANA) founded (originally the <i>American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nurses</i>).	Began professional organization, standards, and advocacy in the U.S.

Key Themes

- **Scientific Approach:** Emphasis on statistics, infection control, and evidence-based practice.
- **Professional Identity:** Shift from “servant” to “trained professional.”
- **Gender Dynamics:** Nursing became a respectable occupation for middle-class women.

3. Expansion & Specialization (Early–Mid 20th Century)

Period	Milestones	Significance
1900–1920	Introduction of registered nurse (RN) licensure in the U.S. (1903) and U.K. (1919).	Legal recognition; standardization of entry requirements.
1914–1918	World War I – massive mobilization of nurses; creation of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps (1901) and Royal Army Nursing Corps (1902).	Demonstrated leadership, triage, and battlefield care.
1930s	Development of public health nursing (e.g., Margaret Sanger, Lillian Wald).	