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NUR 301: Worldview Perspectives

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Florence Nightingale

Florence Nightingale, “The Lady with the Lamp” or the “Angel of Crimea,” was born in Florence, Italy on May 12, 1820. She was a British nurse and the founder of modern nursing. Nightingale was raised in an Anglican faith and believed that God called her to be a nurse at age 16. However, Nightingale was from a wealthy British family so she did not receive praise for her calling as a nurse from her parents. A nurse was looked down upon as a lowly menial labor job. Nightingale’s social stature was expected to marry a wealthy man. However, Nightingale pursued her dreams, despite her family’s disapproval. In 1844, Nightingale attended Lutheran Hospital of Pastor Fliedner as a nursing student in Kaiserwerth, Germany.

After finishing school, Nightingale started a nursing job in 1853 in a hospital in London. She fought with the cholera outbreak and unsanitary conditions. She made it her mission to improve the hygiene practices in the hospitals. This would later significantly lower the death rate in hospitals. In 1854, Nightingale also tended to wounded soldiers during the Crimean War with a group of 34 nurses while also starting a Sanitary Commission. The basic supplies of bandages and soap were very scarce. Water needed to be rationed. However, Nightingale worked tirelessly to help improve the nutrition and conditions of the hospitals where many injured soldiers were dying from illnesses separate from their battle wounds such as typhoid fever, cholera, and dysentery. She was known as “the Lady with the Lamp” because she would walk around the

hallways carrying a lamp while making her rounds to her patients then scrubbing the hospital floors and walls. Due to Nightingale's ambitious care and love for her patients, the hospital death rates were reduced by two-thirds.

Nightingale also created different types of patient services to improve the quality of the patient's hospital stay such as creating a kitchen, laundry room, classroom and library. The kitchen provided food for patients with special dietary requirements, the laundry room brought clean linens, the classroom stimulated entertainment, and the library allowed patients to explore intellectually. These services she brought to the hospital were proposed to other hospitals and changed the operations of future hospital functions and administrations. *Notes on Matters Affecting the Health, Efficiency and Hospital Administration of the British Army* is a book of Nightingale's observations in Crimea. It is an 830-page report analyzing her experience and proposing reforms for other military hospitals operating under similar poor conditions.

In the summer of 1856, Nightingale returned back home and was granted a prize of \$250,000 from the British government. She worked with statisticians to analyze the data for mortality she faced in her previous hospital. They found out that 16,000 of 18,000 deaths were from preventable diseases, not from battle injuries. Nightingale created a Rose Diagram which showed how the Sanitary Commission's work decreased the death rate. She published another book called *Notes on Nursing: What It Is and What It Is Not*, which "provided direction on how to manage the sick" (Selanders, 2023). Nightingale also funded an establishment of St. Thomas' Hospital and created a training school for nurses. Although she became homebound and bedridden for the rest of her life by contracting "Crimean Fever," Nightingale continued to consult with hospitals to provide the best manage field hospitals and work on public sanitation issues.

Nightingale worked relentlessly to devote her life to prevent diseases. Modern nursing has become more safe, respectable, and a compassionate career. She received the title of “Lady of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem” and became the “first woman to receive the Order of Merit” (Selanders, 2023). Even until her death in 1910, she wanted a quiet and modest funeral. She has left a legacy of compassion, diligence, and commitment to patient care.

I believe that Nightingale lived a very humble, yet impactful life. Her missionary work in the hospital fields changed many lives and continues to have a huge influence in nursing today. After accepting God’s calling for her life as a nurse, Nightingale faithfully provided love and care for the wounded and sick. Her story is very inspiring and has influenced me to become a better nurse. Although nursing can be a very demanding and thankless job, I am motivated to work as hard as Florence Nightingale did with the few resources that she had!

References

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