

# Start of Nursing in Turkey and Samples from its Development in the Last Thirty Years<sup>1</sup>

## TÜRKİYE'DE HEMŞİRELİĞİN BAŞLAMASI VE SON 30 YILDAKİ GELİŞMELERDEN ÖRNEKLER

Zuhal ÖZAYDIN\*

\*Dept. of Medical History and Ethics, University of Istanbul Medical School of Cerrahpaşa, İstanbul, TURKEY

### Summary

Nursing education in Turkey flourished with the intense efforts of the Ottoman Red Crescent Organization to meet the high demand for nurses during the War of Tripoli (1911) and Balkan War (1912).

Persistent and strong efforts of the women's wing of the Ottoman Red Crescent Organization, almost all members of which spouses of high level state administrators, and those of the doctors who believed in the importance of nursing have been influential in the popular introduction of the profession and the start of its education.

These first nurses who treated the wounded in the battle fields and hospitals during World War I gained much success in their profession.

Having its education placed in the universities and with its academics, nursing profession has shown great developments in Turkey. Turkish nurses who lay role in the national health programs also continue their works at the international level.

**Key Words:** Turkish nursing, Nursing

T Klin J Med Ethics, Law and History 2002, 10:258-262

### Özet

Türkiye'de hemşirelik eğitimi Trablusgarp (1911) ve Balkan Savaşları'nın (1912) hemşireye olan ihtiyacı şiddetle hissettirmesiyle Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin bir faaliyeti olarak başlamıştır.

Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin hemen hepsi devlet üst düzey yöneticilerinin eşlerinden oluşan kadınlar kolu üyeleri ve ayrıca hemşireliğin önemine inanmış hekimlerin ısrarlı ve gayretli çalışmaları mesleğin tanıtımında ve eğitiminin başlamasında etkili olmuştur.

Dünya Savaşı'nda savaş alanlarında ve hastanelerde yaralılara bakım veren bu ilk hemşireler mesleklerinde büyük başarı kazanmışlardır.

Artık üniversite düzeyinde olan öğretimi, akademik kadroları ile hemşirelik mesleği Türkiye'de büyük gelişmeler göstermiştir. Ulusal sağlık programlarında söz sahibi olan Türk hemşireleri, uluslararası alanda da çalışmalarını sürdürmektedirler.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türk hemşireliği, Hemşirelik

T Klin Tıp Etiği-Hukuku-Tarihi 2002, 10:258-262

Patient care, which is one of the oldest endeavours of human history, is a profession which has extended through our present time following developments showing alterations on the basis of structures and beliefs of societies.

The history of Turkish women functioning in the field of sanitation dates very far back in history, where women who took care of patients were named under various titles in pre-Islamic period (8).

Women are known to take care of wounded soldiers in Islamic wars (13). Women took care of

the wounded under the leadership of sacred woman named Ümmüyetü'l Gaffariye at the prophet Mohammed's war at Hayber. The wounded were taken care of by women in Sa'd bin Ebi Vakkas army of 45000 soldiers at the War of Qadisiye at the time of Ömer, the caliph (9). These samples show that taking care of the wounded men was not against the religion of Islam.

Although there were women who established hospitals at the time of the Ottomans, there seems to be no evidence existing, which showed that female health personnel were also employed.

However there were para-hospital women who were physicians, midwives, people who practiced paramedical popular medicine, women who prepared and sold drugs.

There were women who were employed under the name of grandmothers or mothers and who could be referred to as nurses at the hospitals of Enderun and Harem at The Topkapı Palace (8).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women started to be received for treatment at some of the hospitals (8) and regulations were made out related with woman who took care of these female patients.

Regulations related with women who took care of the lunatics and effected their vaccinations in the lunatic asylums may be given as examples. Medals of honor were granted to women who dressed wounds at The Haseki Hospital during 19<sup>th</sup> century due to their succesful works (1).

The reason why women started taking care of male patients at the time of the Ottomans was mostly the wars. Few number of Turkish women were employed at the Ottoman-Russian war in 1877. Furthermore, Ottoman women served at the Serbian, Mentenegro and The Greek Wars in association with the Ottoman Red Crescent, where they prepared such materials as clothes, beddings, and dressing (5,8).

Fatma Aliye, the daughter of a famous name of The Ottoman Reformation, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, and who was the first woman writer in Turkey, established Cemiyet-I İmdadiye (Society of Help) during the Ottoman Greek War in 1897. This society which was founded by a woman for the first time in Turkey, aimed at taking care of wounded who participated in war and at protecting those who remained behind. This foundation won the sympathy of society by its works and successes. Emine Seniye, who was the sister of Fatma Aliye, the founder of the foundation, was among the permanent writers of the first women's journals. She continued her duty honorary nursing starting from 1897 on the basis of accumulations of sociological studies she carrited out in Switzerland, and she continued her services during the Balkan Wars (24).

The first official nursing education in Turkey was started to be given to the students at the school of Midwifery which was founded within Medical School in İstanbul in 1842. Lectures on Nursing, which were given to Midwives, were published as books (1).

It was, the famous Turkish physician, Dr.Besim Ömer Akalın Pasha, who first emphasized in Turkey the fact that nursing was a separate discipline and should receive a special education. Services given by him on Turkish Nursing are always recalled with gratitude (10,11).

Although a nursing school was founded for the first time in 1908 within the Medical School, the Ottoman Society of Red Crescent, which laid its first foundations in 1867, but which was officially founded in 1877 has a distinct place in Turkish Nursing. Dr. B. Ö. Akalın Pasha, who joined the Conference of Red Cross in 1907, pioneered for the foundation of a female section of Red Crescent in the direction of decisions made in the conference for nursing training. Women served as much as, may be more than, men in The Society of Red Crescent. One of many social activities women carried out in The Society was publications they made. Women were also praised by the Sultan due to such publications which reflected activities in The Society and which also educated people (23).

Particularly, the war at The Balkans played a great role in making Turkish women to be inclined to nursing. It may be said that Moslem Nurses from Turkistan as well as nurses who were sent via Society of Red Cross form The West were effective in this respect during the war. Moreover, Ottoman Women took as samples for themselves, women who served in The Islam Armies.

Thousands of immigrants who fled from the cruelties of The Bulgarians took refugee in İstanbul, and mosques, and masjids were filled with immigrants, and later with patients. While Society of Red Crescent tried to help in those disastrous days which started with an epidemic of cholera and the wounded of war on one side, and the arrival of a great number of immigrants in

İstanbul on the other side, some ladies would apply for voluntary nursing at the hospitals, and some others tried to help the patients in barracks which were turned into hospitals (9).

As there was no adequately organized nursing during The Balkan Wars, patients and the wounded could not receive adequate treatment (7,9). Among these ladies who made efforts to help in patient care in a medium misery was Zinnur Hanım who was one of the heroines of "Les Désenchantées" a novel by P. Loti, one of the famous French writers. Zinnur Hanım continued her work of patient-care after the Balkan War until the end of her life (14). There were other ladies who took care of the wounded by establishing hospitals, one of whom was Aziz Haydar Hanım, who continued without interruption, her work on nursing which started during the first days of the Balkan War besides her work as a trainer during The First World War and the War of Independence (2).

Necessity for trained nurses reached its peak during the First World War, which broke out soon after the Balkan War (14).

Dr. B. Ö. Akalın Pasha invited artists from the West to stress the emphasis on nursing, and had the water-color pictures of nurses made while on duty, which were duplicated as post-cards and stamps to invite women through this way to enter this profession Pasha believed women to be more liable to nursing owing to grace they had in their creation. Available nurses were treated as servants. On the contrary women who performed a gentle duty such as nursing should be powerful mentally, emotionally and morally.

Dr. B. Ö. Akalın Pasha organized courses on nursing in the Red Crescent Center in 1914, at The University between 1914-1915 and, at Kadırga Clinic of Obstetrics in 1916. A large number of ladies participated with great enthusiasm in these courses which were also opened at military hospitals. The palace, likewise attached importance to the Society of Red Crescent and supported women nurses. The prominent higher officials of the Palace and the state would be present at the ceremonies of certificates given to the nurses and

granted them medals of honor. These courses continued through the end of the war (10-12).

Most of the ladies who graduated from these courses served with great devotion at various frontiers during the most bloodshed days of the First World War (14) and were later kindly treated by the Sultan himself (10-12).

Books were also being written on nurses during the War, the most important of which were those written by the Pasha titled "Daily Duties of A nurse during War" and "Nursing" (11,12).

We should distinctively recall the name of Safiye Hüseyin Elbi (1880-1964) among those thoroughly devoted nurses. S. H. Elbi, who was the daughter of Vice-Admiral of Ahmed Besim Pasha, naval attaché in London, studied in Europe gave great services while working with B. Ömer Pasha, represented The Society of Red Crescent in Europe and worked for the profession of nursing until the end of her life (15).

Courses on nursing were also organized at centers of the Red Crescent outside İstanbul, out of which "group of Ottoman Ladies of Red Crescent" had already worked at the Red Crescent hospitals and attended the wounded. 20 of these nurses who were students of Teacher's College and Imperial College were afflicted with an infectious disease and lost their lives for the sake of their duties (22).

Efforts of female nurses received positive reactions from the Ottoman society and intellectuals. Attendance of the wounded by women at battle fields as members of the Red Crescent Society and success obtained played a role for them to be accepted to high education (12).

History of nursing in Turkey is also history of women to participate in social the life. The World War ended but war of the Turks did not. Nursing school was opened at American hospital in İstanbul which was under occupation at that period. In this school Turkish girls were trained to be nurses (4,16).

The War of Independence, which started under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha in 1919, ended with a victory in 1922. One of the most

important revolutions, which Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK succeeded, was to give women their rights. Women were free to choose any professions they desired, as a result of which a process took start in which a large number of nursing schools were opened.

Dr. B. Ö. Akalın pasha played a very great part in the establishment of the Red Crescent Nursing School, which was opened in 1925. As Pasha attached great importance to nursing, he invited qualified and authorised nurses from Germany and Austria and enabled to be benefited from them on management and professional education (16). The graduates of this school later went to be U.S.A. and England to increase their professional knowledge, thus constituting a powerful framework. The Red Crescent Nursing School trained its first leader nurses of Turkey with these efforts.

Furthermore, following the Red Crescent Nursing School, Ministry of Health as well as medical faculties, Society to Combat Tuberculosis, Social Insurance Institution, Ministry of National Defense, and Society for The Protection of Children started to open nursing schools (4).

All these schools which accepted those with a junior-high school education trained midwife-nurse-laboratory personnel since the years they had been established. In these schools which were later designated as college, midwifery, nursing, and laboratory personnel became different branches, thereby maintaining educational standardization by applying different curriculum (16).

A very important reform in Turkish Nursing is the opening of nursing colleges for the purpose of raising nursing profession to a universitarian level for providing patients with more knowledgeable and competent care, for gaining personnel capable of making researches on nursing and of coping with the country's sanitation problems, and for training teachers, managers and specialized nurses (4).

It was Prof.Dr.Perihan Velioglu who first drew attention to the significance of nursing colleges. In the Red Crescent Nursing School which she entered as a high school graduate at her

age of 18, she noticed the remarkable difference between a 14-year old student who came after finishing junior high school and the student who came after finishing high school. She observed critically how difficult it would be for a young girl of 14 years of age who herself was in a problematic stage to approach the patients therapeutically. Therefore P. Velioglu was the first nurse who expressed that nursing candidates should be high school graduates (6).

P. Velioglu was also against school which were referred to as hospital-nursing school. For, these schools were established for the intention of providing service and could not be expected to exhibit free ideas different from students who were being educated under severe discipline. Service and education must be separated (16,17,19). Training of nursing which endeavoured for the happiness of human beings must be delivered to training institutions, and this training could only be realized in a multi-dimensional world view in a universitarian medium and discipline (18).

In the direction of views, the first nursing college in Turkey was opened in the Aegean University in İzmir in 1955 (4).

Nursing college which was founded after preparing its training staff in Turkey is Florence Nightingale Nursing College (FNNC). Seven nurses who were all to constitute training staff among whom was P. Velioglu, who, attended Columbia University in The U.S.A. with scholarship from AID organization to take a bachelor's and master degree on nursing. These nurses who went to the U.S.A. for education, prepared curriculum for FNNC together with R.L. McManus, the Director of Nursing Dept. at The Columbia University. This distinct school which was founded in 1961 and which selected students for school by science grade today continues its activities as connected to the İstanbul University. During that same year, another nursing college was founded in Ankara connected to Hacettepe University (4,6).

Nurses who had no chance of receiving high education were given courses via Open University in 1990 with the efforts of P. Velioglu (6).

With the nursing rising to a universitarian level in Turkey departmental branches were established in nursing colleges. Nurses who became professor and associate professor lectured on bachelors and doctorate lessons and nurses received academics titles (20). There are 79 nursing schools in Turkey, all of which give a bachelor's degree after college.

With the studies and efforts of P. Velioglu and her friends, principles and standards related with nursing training in Turkey were established (3).

There were reform in nursing management in Turkey. Nursing directorates were founded in some Universities with efforts of P. Velioglu who advocated the idea that every profession and its problems are best known, defended, solved and conducted by a member of that profession, and regulations were made out again by P. Velioglu (6,17). Moreover, Turkish Nurses are employed in Advisory Institution related with nursing and midwifery within High Council of Health included in the Ministry of Health to solve professional problems (25).

Services by great nurse-leader P. Velioglu (b. 1926) on Turkish Nursing will always be remembered.

Today, Turkish Nurses participate national and international congress and arrange congresses and symposiums. Nursing colleges have publication organs, with Turkish society of nurses taking the lead. They share with their colleagues their professional knowledge and the result of their researches with the articles they write in these journals.

In addition Turkish Society of Nurses is a member of ICN (Internatinoal Council of Nursing) and functions in The Union of European Researchers, in Nursing Section of WHO and many international institutions (20).

Nursing in Turkey started to take its place in social life by the works of few devoted women due to wars at the end of the last century, and today Turkish Nurses are improved and serve the country either by attending their patients or as educators, managers, researchers, and writers.

## REFERENCES

- Altıntaş A. "Türk Hemşireliğinin Başlangıcı". Sağlık Alanında Türk Kadını. Yıldırım N, ed. Published by Novartis, İstanbul, 1998: 373-87.
- Araz N. "Eğitimi Savaşının Öncüsü Aziz haydar hanım". Published by Milliyet, 31 July 1988.
- Kum E, Velioglu P. "Temel Hemşirelik Eğitimi Programına İlişkin İlke ve Standartlar". Türk Hemşireler Dergisi, 1981; 31:1:3-7.
- Erhan Şentürk E. Hemşirelik Tarihi. Divan Printing Press, İstanbul, 1978: 105.
- Özaydın Z. "The Foundation of the Ottoman Red Crescent Society According to its Yearbook `Sâlnâme"'. History of Medicine Studies, İstanbul, 1990: 4:70-89.
- Özaydın Z. "An Outstanding Pioneer in Turkish Nursing Prof.Dr.Perihan Velioglu". Hemşirelik Forumu 1998; 1:2:59-64.
- Özbay K. Türk Asker Hekimliği ve Asker Hastaneleri. Yörük Printing Press, İstanbul, 1976: 1:99.
- Sarı N. "Women Dealing with Health During the Ottoman Reign". The New History of Medicine Studies, İstanbul, 1996: 2-3:11-64.
- Sarı N, Özaydın Z. "Ottoman Ladies and the Red Crescent". Sendrom, Mach 1992; 4:3:66-78.
- Sarı N, Özaydın Z. "Dr.Besim Ömer Pasha and Nurse Education". Sendrom, April 1992; 4:4:10-8.
- Sarı N, Özaydın Z. "Dr. Besim Ömer Pasha and Nurse Education II". Sendrom, May 1992; 4:5:72-80.
- Sarı N, Özaydın Z. "Social Responses to Female Nurses in the Ottoman Society". Sendrom, August 1992; 4:8:6-15.
- Şeşen R. "Some Remarks on the Medical Profession at the Early Period of Islam". The New History of Medicine Studies, İstanbul, 1996: 2-3:65-70.
- Toros T. "Ayдын Kalburüstü Pek Çok Hanım Fahri Hemşireliği Koşmuştu". Yakın Tarihimiz, Published by Milliyet, 393-5.
- Toros T. "The First Turkish Nurse Safiye Hüseyin Elbi". Skylife, 144:54-60.
- Tüzün R. "Hemşirelik Eğitiminin Tarihi Gelişimi ve Temel İlkeleri". Türk Hemşireler Dergisi 1978; 28:2:13-24.
- Velioglu P. "Hemşirelikte Liderlik". Hemşirelik Üstüne Düşünceler, Lâtin Printing Press, İstanbul, 1977: 83-7.
- Velioglu P. "Çağdaş Hemşirelik Eğitimi Üstüne Düşünceler". Hemşireler Dergisi, July 1961; 3:3:3-7.
- Velioglu P. Hemşirelikte Bilimselleşmeye Doğru. Bozok Printing Press, İstanbul, 1985: 3-7.
- Velioglu P. "Hemşireliğin Son Kırk Yıl İçindeki Gelişiminin Dokuz Kilometre Taşı". Hemşirelik Bülteni 1993; VII:29:1-5.
- Velioglu P. "Sağlık Sorunlarımız ve Hastaneler". Hemşirelik Üstüne Düşünceler, 119-25.
- \_\_\_\_\_: Ottoman Archival Documents (BOA), DH.KMS, 31/36, 1333 Ca 22.
- \_\_\_\_\_: BOA, DH.KMS., 45/56, 1336 M 5.
- \_\_\_\_\_: Yakın Tarihimiz, Published by Milliyet, 379-81.
- \_\_\_\_\_: Official letter dated 28.02.1994, No. 03213 from Turkish Republic Ministry Of health, General Directory Of Medical Care Services.

**Geliş Tarihi:** 08.05.2001

**Yazışma Adresi:** Dr.Zuhal ÖZAYDIN  
Dept. of Medical History and Ethics  
University of İstanbul Medical School  
of Cerrahpaşa, İstanbul, TURKEY

<sup>¶</sup>This article was Presented as a poster in the 36<sup>th</sup> International Congress on the History of Medicine, 6-11 September 1998.