

FORTY YEARS OF THE UNDERGRADUATE COURSE IN NURSING AT THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF PARANÁ

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On the occasion of the launch of this issue, the academic community of the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) is also commemorating 40 years since the creation of the Undergraduate Course in Nursing. It is a date of great importance, as it was in the context of this trajectory that the conditions for the creation of the *Cogitare Enfermagem* Journal appeared and matured.

On 27th of May 1974, the setting-up of the Undergraduate Course in Nursing was authorized by Resolution 04 of the Teaching and Research Council. An accurate survey of the historical circumstances which preceded this initiative indicates that the decision to open the course was, to a certain extent, determined by movements of national and even international scope. In the 1970s, an event occurred which had a decisive influence on the internal mobilization of South American countries to increase the creation of various courses in the area of health, including those of nursing. This was the Special Meeting of Ministers of Health of the Americas, held in Santiago, Chile, in October 1972, and which instituted the II Ten-Year Health Plan for the Americas, to be implemented by 1980. The axis of this plan, to a large extent, was related to the need for greater investment in the qualification of health personnel – which, at that time, was evaluated as significantly inadequate, both quantitatively and qualitatively. This shortfall compromised any and all initiatives to take health care to city outskirts and rural areas in Latin America. Another fact linked to the debate on shortages of human resources and the demand for a solution was the creation, in Brazil, of the National Health System Law (Law N. 6.229/75), which determined that, among others, the Ministry of Education should accelerate the training of human resources in the sector. In 1974, the Ministry of Health led the formation of an Interministerial Working Group to prospect the personnel situation in the health area and make proposals, which were unduly incorporated into the II National Development Plan. Not long afterwards, the Program for Strategic Preparation of Health Personnel was initiated, effectively, in 1976 by the Ministries of Health and Education and Culture, with the direct cooperation of the Pan American Health Organization.

In relation to the local situation, until 1975, there was only one higher school of nursing in Curitiba, at the Catholic University of Paraná. The need for another course was urgent. The circumstances, therefore, favored this initiative; which took place in the ambit of the UFPR.

Looking back over these 40 years of history, they record a saga of thousands of people who were present from its beginning, consolidation and expansion, achieving the dimensions which can be observed today: the presence of two consistent *stricto sensu* postgraduate programs, a scientific publication which is recognized and indexed in various databases, and the ongoing activity of seven study and research groups besides the participation in innumerable local, regional and national programs and projects. This fact, however, must not lead us to give little importance to the conditions present back at the start of this journey. It was far from easy. Various documents and reports provide an account of the great difficulty - relating both to the lack of personnel – lecturers and technical-administrative staff – and to physical space and the materials necessary for routine activities in the training of nurses. Because of this, it is reasonable to take into account that each drop of sweat, every period of anxiety, every solution for a problem, every applause of a success, every tear and laugh were the human ingredients which built the 40 years of the Course. The first lecturers on the Undergraduate Course in Nursing were nurses from the UFPR Teaching Hospital, hence the umbilical link between Course and Hospital, which leads to permanent recognition for this institution and all its professionals for their work in the process. To these, as history has moved on, one can add others, who, in differing care spaces, have received our students to carry out practical classes such as placements, allowing an inexorable dimension of the training: the world of concrete work. Up until now, the Course has produced exactly 1,349 nurses, of whom only 81 were men, 6% of the total.

Nursing, as this data indicates, remains a profession sought mainly by women, at least in our context.

It has been gratifying to meet ex-students in a wide variety of activities – care, management, research, lecturing, consultancies etc. – in health services such as hospitals, maternity centres, health departments and other organizations, in the capital city, or in municipalities of the metropolitan region, or in the nonmetropolitan areas of the state, and even abroad - whence, from time to time, we receive news.

As with any human action, this was only possible because it happened as the result of the work of students, staff, lecturers, professionals, volunteers, contributors, and even those who preferred to remain anonymous. To each and every one of these is owed part of the credit for the current state of the UFPR Undergraduate Course in Nursing, evaluated in 2013 by the Ministry of Education and Culture with full marks. Challenges and setbacks continue, however, in different forms, and it is expected that new generations will hold, with the same tenacity, the direction this work has taken.

The *Cogitare Enfermagem* Journal clearly has a special place in this context. Regarding the structural difficulties which, today, make the running of scientific journals significantly arduous, *Cogitare Enfermagem* has gone forward with renewed energy, thus fulfilling a strategic role in communicating production of this nature in our country.