



AAHN
*American Association for the
History of Nursing*



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St. John Fisher College

Onsite Program

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Saturday, September 9, 2017

Concurrent Session IV – 10:30-12:00pm

4A. Nursing's Reach

1. "Because We've Always Done it that Way": A Scoping Review of Manuscripts on Nursing from the 1500s to 1850s

Tanya Langtree; Prof. Melanie Birks; Dr. Narelle Biedermann; Dr. Nicholas Ralph

Purpose of Study: This presentation describes the findings of a scoping review of manuscripts regarding the foundations of nursing practice that were produced between the 1500s to 1850s in Europe, North America and Australia. This review identifies and describes the key content themes contained in these manuscripts.

Rationale and Significance: Contemporary nursing has long been associated with the publication in 1859 of Nightingale's *Notes on Nursing: What It Is, and What It Is Not*. However, the discovery of a 1617 Spanish treatise *Instruccions de Enfermeros (IdE) [Instructions for Nurses]*, highlights that at least one manuscript was written about the profession at least two centuries prior to Nightingale.

IdE described the foundational cares performed by the nurse in seventeenth century Spain. Incorporated into each descriptor of care was a rationale that was supported by (then contemporary) scientific and/or clinical reasoning. Hence, the information presented in *IdE* is similar to the structural organization of contemporary fundamentals of nursing texts. The inclusion of such elements in *IdE* suggests core aspects of today's professional identity and clinical practice evolved through the transgenerational sharing of knowledge across cultures. However, as a profession we know little about the existence of such manuscripts prior to *Notes on Nursing*, and how, or if, they helped shape contemporary nursing practice.

Description of Methodology: Data collection for this review involved several stages: locating potential sources (database and catalogue search); preliminary review (key word appraisal, inclusion/exclusion criteria applied); secondary review (confirmation of content, manual searching of reference lists, primary source located via internet search); determining the authenticity of each source; and charting the data. Additional inclusion criteria used in this review was that the manuscript could be published or unpublished. Exclusion criteria employed in this review was that the work must be non-fiction. A thematic analysis of each source was then performed and the key themes were identified.

Major Primary and Secondary Sources: After searching six different databases over a period of four months, fourteen digitized primary sources were located.

Findings and Conclusions: The manuscripts discovered in this review were written between 1541 and 1859, with the majority originating from Spain. Key themes that were identified included procedural considerations such as hygiene care; comfort measures; sanitation; and treatment regimens. Contemporary professional issues such as advocacy, communication and resource management were also evident. Their presence intimates that nursing identity and professional standards originated prior to Nightingale's reformation.

2. The Intersections of Biography and Nursing History

Lea M. Williams, PhD

Purpose: The purpose of this presentation is to examine the efficacy of approaching the study of nursing history through biography. My case study is the life of Ellen N. La Motte (1873-1961), a nurse, writer, and activist about whom I am writing a book-length biography. My presentation will investigate the benefits of using the life of a single individual to analyze the complexities of nursing history, particularly that of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century.

Rationale and Significance: Many leaders of nursing history were exceptional individuals in regards to their abilities as well as their backgrounds--they frequently were privileged in terms of their race, gender, and class. La Motte certainly falls into this category as a white woman who came from a well to do family who benefited from the networks her family provided while building her nursing career. Yet, she also is representative of many who were involved in public health nursing and social reform efforts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When exploring the life and work of La Motte, questions arise as to whether or not she fulfills the prerogative that biographical subjects should be both exceptional and representative of their time. By considering this question, my study will reflect on the value of using biographical approaches to think through the way nursing history developed and why.