THE HISTORY OF NURSING EDUCATION IN SERBIA AND DEVELOPMENT OF A DEPARTMENT OF NURSING

ISTORIJAT AKADEMSKOG OBRAZOVanja MEDICINSKIH Sestara u SRBIJI I RAZVOJ KATEDRE ZA ZDRAVSTVENU NEGU

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Introduction

In addition to the introduction of new methods of nursing standards, one of the biggest advances made in the field of nursing in the second half of the 20th century was definitely the founding of nursing faculties in developed countries worldwide. In the time of former Yugoslavia there were several schools of higher professional education in Belgrade, Zagreb, Rijeka, Ljubljana and Sarajevo, and afterwards the others were also founded. Nevertheless, the number of senior nurses was disproportionate when compared with the number of nurses with secondary education, which certainly affected the quality of professional work and thus contributed to the development of the profession. The complexity of care in the nursing profession and the need to maintain competency and professional responsibility have forced many nurses to acquire the relevant knowledge at the related faculties (pedagogy, defectology, i.e. special education and rehabilitation or healthcare management) in an arduous and indirect way [1].

History of Academic Nursing Education in Serbia

In order to enable nurses to obtain required higher nursing education as approved by professional associations, with the signing of the Bologna Declaration and preparing the guidelines for the new Law on Higher Education, Scientific-Teaching Council of the Faculty of Medicine in Novi Sad adopted a curriculum and a Nursing Four-Year Academic Program at a session held in April 2003. At the time, these studies were the first of their kind in the Republic of Serbia and in their immediate surroundings, designed according to similar studies in Western countries, such as Australia, Canada, the United States and some western European countries. Two years later, the Faculty of Medicine in Priština, headquartered in Kosovska Mitrovica, established Basic Academic Studies in Nursing designed according to the curriculum in Novi Sad. The curriculum of studies in nursing of the Faculty of Medicine in Novi Sad has also become the conceptual basis for academic studies in nursing in the Republic of Srpska (Banja Luka and Foča) [2].

By adopting the Law on Higher Education in September 2005, which regulates the system and activities in the field of higher education, the accreditation process of higher education programs was initiated and the National Council for Higher Education has been established. Matters within the competence of the National Council included defining the list of professional, academic and scientific titles among other things. The nursing studies’ curriculum at the Faculty of Medicine in Novi Sad passed the accreditation process successfully, and the academic title that was acquired after the completion of this program was an organizer of health care.

Education of nurses in the Republic of Serbia in all educational institutions should be organized in the compliance with Directives 2005/36/EC and 2013/55/EU which applies to professional qualification recognition of regulated professions, as well as in accordance with. It should also follow the Bologna Process while respecting Serbian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQFS). In the process of joining the European Union, the Republic of Serbia has committed itself to adoption of the law on regulated professions and the recognition of professional qualifications that will have deferred effect, i.e. it will enter into force following the accession to EU. The preliminary draft
of this law regulates minimum training and education requirements in the Republic of Serbia for access and performance of the so-called sectoral professions, including general nurses. For these professions, the European Union has prescribed the minimum content of higher education, and even allocated the number of teaching hours for some of them, so that all study programs in the European Union should comply with these requirements. As for nurses responsible for general care, education curriculum, the hours of theoretical and clinical nursing education are clearly defined.

Taking into account the above mentioned, the Faculty of Medicine in Novi Sad has successfully revised the academic study program in nursing with accreditation adopted in 2014 which determines the title of a graduate nurse upon completion of this program. The new curriculum comprises the study of all subjects introduced in order to reach the required 4,600 hours, which enables the acquisition of competences defined in the NQFS.

**Development of the Department of Nursing**

Academic studies in nursing were introduced in 2003 at the initiative of Professor Stevan Popović, MD, PhD, the President of the Teaching-Scientific Council of the Faculty of Medicine and Faculty Dean at that time, and the Department of Nursing was founded. The first Department Chairman was Professor Tomislav Cigić, MD, PhD and the first and the only assistant at the 2003/04 academic year was Dragana Milutinović, now a doctor of medical science, associate professor and the current chairperson of this Department. Soon more teaching assistants were engaged at the Department: Ivica Lalić, MD, Iljja Andrijević, MD, Dragana Živković, MD, Jovan Matijasević and Nensi Lalić, MD and Associate Professor Feodora Popić Paljić. Prof Đurica Matić, PhD, was engaged as a research associate.

Being not only competent but also exceptionally able to perceive the reality of the moment, benevolent and willing to cooperate Prof. Tomislav Cigić was a role model for all teaching assistants as well as students of nursing until 2007, when the chair was taken over by Assist. Prof. Đorđe Gajdobranski. The best first-generation students: Branislava Brestovački, Dragana Šimin (today PhDs in medical sciences and assistant professors) and Snejana Bulatović acquired the title of teaching assistant of Science in Nursing until 2007, when the chair was taken over by Assoc. Prof. Dragana Simin has made a significant contribution to the teaching content and the modes of delivery of the latter. Accordingly, the teachers' and associates' pedagogical work has always been highly rated by students.

When analyzing professional and scientific work of the professors of the Department, we can be proud since almost all of them are authors of papers published in best-ranked international journals, among which they are ranked in the category M21a. Some of the professors are authors of textbooks and manuals in the field of nursing, written in cooperation with the professors of the Faculty of Medicine in Novi Sad, as well as other faculties. Managing and participating in long-term and short-term projects of the Provincial Secretariat for Higher Education and Science is the regular activity of most professors at the Department. In addition to participating in scientific projects, the professors at the Department were also the project managers financed by the City Administration for Health and participants of TEMPUS and Erasmus + programs. With our creative workshops, we participated four times at the Science Festival as part of the team of the Faculty of Medicine, and our assistants Andrea Božić, Ivana Dondo and Milena Mikić took active part in the implementation of compulsory first aid training for students of the University of Novi Sad.

During these fifteen years we have been working on improving international cooperation. Prof. Majda Pajnikhar, Professor and the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences in Maribor is our Visiting Professor, and Prof. Dragana Milutinović was elected in 2016 a Visiting Professor of the Faculty of Medicine at the Jozip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. Within academic mobility program, we hosted teaching assistants of the Faculty of Health Sciences from Maribor and Ljubljana.

Despite the significant achievements of our students and teachers, there are still unfinished tasks as might be expected, which will certainly be completed in the coming years.

**References**