Historical development and current status of emergency nursing in Turkey

Türkiye’de acil hemşireliğinin tarihsel gelişimi ve mevcut durumu

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As the demand for high quality Accident and Emergency Departments and nursing staff increases throughout Turkey, the need for more specialized emergency nurse training has also increased. Although there have been a number of positive developments regarding emergency nursing standards, the general quality of emergency nurse training needs to be improved and job definitions amended to better reflect the specialist duties of emergency nurses.

Key Words: Emergency nursing; historical development.

The medical definition of an emergency is ‘administering healthcare services to a patient immediately, for an incident that is related to physical or emotional danger’.\(^1\) The Accident and Emergency (A&E) service is often the start of a healthcare pathway that consists of many other medical services. The nature of the accident results in healthcare services beginning at the site where the emergency occurred, and it continues until the patient reaches the rehabilitation stage.\(^1,2\)

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Many of the improvements in A&E services were first pioneered in England and Germany. The United States (US) also started to promote the importance of A&E services, especially after the second World War.\(^2,3\) As far back as the 1960s, it was realized that the role of A&E nurses was noticeably different from that of other nurses. The necessity of providing these nurses with more specialized training was being realized. As nurse training improved noticeably during the 1970s, the development of branch nursing was formed. In the US, EDNA - the Emergency Department Nurses Association - was established by a group of nurses to help the medical world recognize their specialist needs. In 1985, the group changed its name to ENA - Emergency Nurses Association.\(^4,5\) In 1972, the English Royal College of Nursing separated accident nursing and emergency nursing groups. In 1990, these two separate groups combined under the name “Accident & Emergency Nursing Association”,\(^5\) enabling the group to establish a professional authority to standardize training opportunities in emergency nursing care. Later, developments within the nursing profession resulted in the roles and responsibilities of emergency nursing being regarded as a specialized branch of nursing, which is based on an extensive and specific set of skills and knowledge.\(^3,5\)

Over the years, when we look at the progression of this medical area, it becomes clear that the training authorities responsible for the emergency nurses in the US have officially recognized a higher level of training by awarding graduates with a Master’s degree or a certificate. Certified Emergency Nurs-
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The first known instances of emergency nursing in Turkey occurred during the Crimean War (1854-1856), within the Selimiye Barracks, which were set up during the war as a hospital to care for the wounded soldiers. Florence Nightingale worked here during this time (1820-1910). Turkey witnessed its own development of the nursing profession, mainly through the emergency nursing services offered to injured soldiers during the Crimean War. The Turkish army suffered heavy military losses and high numbers of wounded soldiers during the war. With the combined effect of the Trablusgarp War (1911) and Balkan Wars (1912), the necessary care required by so many injured soldiers during the war. The effects of the universal changes and developments in emergency nursing were seen in Turkey over this period. Attempts to specialize nurses in the emergency care arena were underway. An Emergency Care Nursing Course was set up for the first time in 1994 by Semahat Arsel Nursing Education and Research Center (SANERC), which is affiliated with the Vehbi Koc Foundation. The course consists of both theoretical and practical training sessions and runs every year for eight weeks. Then, the Emergency Care Nursing Course was held in 2003, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and University, in order to develop qualified nurses who are ready for employment in emergency services. The purpose of this course was to increase the efficiency and reliability of the care provided in these units. In December 2005, new medical training guidelines were introduced for all registered nurses, healthcare assistants and midwives working within the Ministry of Health hospitals. The “Emergency Care Nursing Training Program” guidelines state nurses must enroll in a three-week theoretical and two-week practical training course.

The first Trauma and Resuscitation Course (TRC) was organized in 1998 by the Turkish Association of Trauma and Emergency Surgery at the 1st Regional Trauma and Emergency Surgery Congress. Aimed at medical doctors, this course still runs in 20 cities throughout the country. In December 2006, new guidelines, entitled the “Ambulances and Emergency Health Vehicles Regulation”, stated “at least one doctor and/or Emergency Medical Technician (EMT-
The importance of the emergency health services in Turkey, especially of emergency care nursing, is increasing accordingly. The medical personnel working in emergency services should have adequate knowledge, skills and experience in order to attempt recovery under often extreme trauma conditions, which are often life-threatening. In Turkey, there are no existing standards defined by the Ministry of Health, higher education institutions or non-governmental organizations; however, the studies regarding this issue are ongoing.

REFERENCES