

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.

Acil servislerde verilen sağlık hizmetinin ve özellikle de acil bakım hemşireliğinin önemi gün geçtikçe artmakta, bu birimlerde hizmet veren hemşirelerin diğer hemşirelerden daha farklı özelliklere sahip olmaları ve mutlaka özel eğitimden geçmeleri gerekmektedir. Türkiye’deki mevcut duruma baktığımız zaman, acil hemşireliği konusunda olumlu gelişmeler bulunmakla birlikte, bu alanda standartların geliştirilerek görev tanımlarının yapılmasına gereksinim vardır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Acil hemşireliği; tarihsel gelişim.

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]

Recent History of Emergency Nursing (International)

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-

ing training programs started in the US in the 1980s. These programs are overseen by CEN - the Certified Emergency Nurse group. These certificates are valid for four years, with a further examination required after this period to renew certification.^[4,5] In the US, the medical applications of emergency nursing are governed by legislation in most states. Additionally, the Society of Trauma was established as a sub-branch of Emergency Nursing. Trauma core courses were organized in order to maintain international standards for trauma training. The first International Emergency Nursing Congress was held in 1985, while the first Trauma Core Course was organized in England in 1990.^[5]

Recent History of Emergency Nursing in Turkey

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).^[3,6,7] 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 highlighted the importance of and deficiencies in the Turkish emergency nursing services.^[3,7]

During the Washington Congress of the Red Cross, Dr. Besim Omer Pasha recorded that nursing should be regarded as a profession, and that as such it should be separated into branches. The Turkish Red Crescent was established and recognized the necessity for the nursing profession in the country. The first formal nursing education school in Turkey was established in 1911. Turkish women who obtained certificates at the end of the six-month course were given the title of Volunteer Trained Nurse. Nurses who served in the Patient Care Services during the Balkan Wars were also awarded this title. These courses ran until 1914.^[6,7]

The first implementation and development of the modern nursing profession in Turkey started with the establishment of the Republican government. The first nursing school of the Republican era was the Kızılay Private Nursing High School. It was opened in Istanbul in 1925. The graduates of this school undertook nursing duties during the many national

disasters and wars, providing first-aid care to the wounded and to disaster victims.^[3,6-8]

The Ege University School of Nursing was established in 1955 as the first degree level nurses training center not only in Turkey, but in all of Europe. The first Master of Science (Msc) in nursing was started at Hacettepe University in 1968, and the first Doctorate (PhD) program was started at the same university in 1972.^[7-9] The first academic level training was the Emergency Nursing Master's Program, which ran from 1996 to 1997 at Marmara University, Nursing Academy.^[2,3,9] In addition to the undergraduate level Emergency Care/First Aid courses being conducted at the Nursing Academies in Turkey, obligatory Emergency Nursing course modules are now conducted within the subjects of Surgery, Operating Room, Pediatrics and Internal Medicine Nursing as part of the post-graduate courses.^[3]

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.^[3,10] 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.^[11] 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.^[12]

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.^[13] In December 2006, new guidelines, entitled the 'Ambulances and Emergency Health Vehicles Regulation', stated "*at least one doctor and/or Emergency Medical Technician (EMT-*

P; paramedic) and healthcare professional must accompany every emergency aid ambulance". A new standardized quality of training was required for the emergency treatment of trauma patients. With the cooperation of the National Trauma and Emergency Surgery Association and the Ministry of Health, the Trauma and Resuscitation Course for Nurses, Paramedics and Technicians (TRC-NPT) was established in February 2007. The course is aimed at nurses, paramedics and technicians, and runs in 20 cities throughout the country. The TRC-NPT course runs for four days and consists of theoretical and practical sections. The certificates, which are approved by the Ministry of Health, are given to those participants who are successful in the written, oral and practical examinations held at the end of the course. The TRC-NPT certificate is valid for five years.^[13,14]

In order to show the development of an educational subject managed by healthcare professionals, quality research and scientific activities should be carried out and published in professional books and journals for industry review and comment. When we look at the relevant studies conducted in Turkey, we find that the first book written in this area is *Emergency Nursing* (1990), followed by *Emergency Care* (1998), *Basic First Aid Applications* (1999) and *Trauma and Resuscitation Course for Nurses, Technicians* (2008). There is no specific periodical regarding emergency nursing; however, articles written in this field are currently published in different nursing journals.^[3,14]

In Turkey, the only relevant associations currently in existence are the Turkish Association of Trauma and Emergency Surgery and the Emergency Medicine Association of Turkey. As of yet, there is no Emergency Nursing Association available.^[3,15,16] Nonetheless, emergency nurses are accepted as members in both of the aforementioned associations. Nursing articles are being published in their periodicals and nursing sessions are included in the congresses and symposiums organized by these associations. Numerous research studies have been made in the area of emergency nursing, and are discussed in the sessions.^[3]

Despite these developments, it is a known fact that trauma is the most common cause of death worldwide for the younger population. Since it is believed that post-traumatic injuries in Turkey will increase as the result of vehicular accidents, natural disasters such as earthquakes and national disasters,^[17]

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.

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