

1st Suggested Reading for 2020

2020 will be remembered as the Year of the Nurse, celebrating the bicentenary of the birth of our colleague Florence Nightingale. Many events, congresses, and conferences had been organized around the globe to help people around world understand who Florence Nightingale was, and what she has done for the nursing profession, but also to understand who nurses are and what they do today.

Then suddenly COVID-19 arrived... and all the events have been cancelled, no more congresses and conferences, neither in Italy nor in any other country.

Now, our colleagues are working beyond their limits, like Florence Nightingale did in her days, they are isolating patients, caring for them, comforting and accompanying to the point of death those who do not survive.

Also, today, like Florence Nightingale in her days during the Crimean War, nurses are at the battle front. In the past, like in the present, nurses collect data, exchange ideas, and take notes of what they see because afterwards, when everything is over, they will be useful to gain a better understanding of what happened, and how to provide better care.

No world congress, no conference, and no expert in nursing could have better demonstrated and made everyone understand who nurses are and what they do.

It looks like the world, politicians, and the public seem to realize only now the nurses' high level of professionalism, their competencies, and their altruistic spirit of service, which is the same that drove Florence Nightingale.

For years, international studies in which Italy has actively taken part (e.g. RN4CAST) have produced data warning everyone about a dangerous phenomenon, based solely on economic justifications, that has drastically reduced the numbers of nurses caring for patients (i.e. nurse-patient ratios).

In recent years, data emerging from these studies (Aiken et al. 2014; Aiken et al. 2012) have shown that the current numbers of nurses in some settings are not sufficient to ensure safe care to patients not even in normal conditions. Unfortunately, today this shortage of nurses has become more evident than ever, and nurses themselves are paying the consequences of this shortage.

We hope that from this dramatic and anguishing experience, important lessons will be learnt and that they do not vanish into thin air once the emergency is over.

Therefore, our editorial choice for 2020 is to suggest the reading of articles regarding the works and actions Florence Nightingale, to celebrate in this way all the nurses in the world, who on a daily basis expose themselves to unimaginable risks, simply to fulfil their duty.

References

- Aiken et al. 2014 "Nurse staffing and education and hospital mortality in nine European countries: a retrospective observational study." *The Lancet*, 383 (9931): 1824-1830;
- Aiken et al. 2012 "Patient safety, satisfaction, and quality of hospital care: cross sectional surveys of nurses and patients in 12 countries in Europe and the United States." *BMJ* 344: e1717.