



# FLORENCE 2020



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ON THE HISTORY OF NURSING

## CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS



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## A Sightseeing Over the Illusion: the Portuguese Nurses and the Alienated at the End of Nineteenth Century

Analisa Candeias<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>, Luís Sá<sup>4,5,6</sup>, Alexandra Esteves<sup>7,8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Minho - Nursing School; <sup>2</sup>UICISA-E (Core UMinho); <sup>3</sup>PhD Student: Catholic University of Portugal - Institute of Health Sciences; <sup>4</sup>Centro de Investigação Interdisciplinar em Saúde (CIIS); <sup>5</sup>Sociedade Portuguesa de História de Enfermagem; <sup>6</sup>Catholic University of Portugal - Institute of Health Sciences; <sup>7</sup>Catholic University of Portugal - Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences; <sup>8</sup>Laboratório de Paisagens, Património e Território (Lab2pt) - University of Minho

Nurses, in Portugal, crossed significant moments of transition in the passage from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, it was at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the portuguese nurses began to be distinguished as fundamental agents in the assistance of the alienated at psychiatric hospitals. This century, in the country, was fruitful in establishing spaces for the assistance of the alienated: by 1848, in Lisbon, the Hospital de Rilhafoles was opened; in 1883 was inaugurated the Hospital de Alienados do Conde de Ferreira, in Oporto; and, in 1893, the Casa do Sagrado Coração de Jesus, in Sintra, received its first alienated. In all these spaces worked nurses, secular or religious.

The aim of this research is to identify nurse's responsibilities on the assistance of the alienated at Hospital de Rilhafoles, Hospital de Alienados do Conde de Ferreira and Casa do Sagrado Coração de Jesus, at the end of the nineteenth century. It was used a research and documental analysis, having Foucault as base, and were analyzed the following main sources: «Relatório sobre a Organização do Hospital de Alienados em Rilhafoles» (1851), «Regulamento Geral do Hospital de Alienados do Conde de Ferreira» (1883), «Regla de Nuestro Gran Padre San Agustín y Constituciones de la Orden Hospitalaria de Nuestro Glorioso Padre San Juan de Dios» (1890) and «Prontuario del Enfermero» (1891).

The portuguese nurses were responsible for monitoring the alienated, ensuring that the hospital routines were followed, and that the self-care (e.g. hygiene, food) was guaranteed. They were also responsible for administering medication and the fulfillment of other treatments, such as hydrotherapy, occupational work or ergotherapy. By medical indication, nurses could also apply containment and restriction techniques (e.g. shackles, straightjackets), having to be gentle, affectionate and benevolent. Learning to be nurses in the spaces of the hospitals, they were also forced to live within them, making personal the institutional routines and merging their private lives into the public life of the institutions.

Although the professionalization of portuguese nursing only occurred at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we know now that nurses were present in the care contexts that existed in the country until that time, and were also caregivers to the alienated who were in those realities. There is still a long path to make in the construction of the history of mental health and psychiatric nursing, on the scope of the portuguese conjuncture as well on an international level, and this work may provide a support for future research, that could involve not only nurses, but all those who intend to contribute for the development of nursing profession.

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