

## THE BEGINNING OF NURSE LICENSURE IN ENGLAND

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Purpose: The beginning of nurse registration in England followed a long and tenuous course. Issues of feminism, the Industrial Revolution, the emergence of nursing as a profession, and Florence Nightingale's clout would all impact the course of registration. This poster explores the historical and social variables that influenced English nursing registration.

Method: A social history framework was used to examine events related to nursing registration in the context of social themes relevant to the Victorian Era. Historical research methods were used to examine both primary and secondary source materials.

Findings: The arguments of proponents and opponents of registration provide insight into challenges that today's nurses face including a competent and ample workforce and the role of nursing regulatory bodies. The interaction between nurses and employers was then and continues to be relevant to the status of nursing as a profession.

Discussion: The English Nurses Registration Act passed in 1919, just one year after English women gained the right to vote. Both acts were passed after lengthy battles that span the years of the mid to late Victorian era, and both acts were heavily influenced by events of the Industrial Revolution and the Women's movement. Nurses of the day were fiercely divided on the issue of mandatory registration. Some nurses felt it would be good for the development of nursing and the status of women, others felt it would not. Some felt nursing was a profession like medicine. They felt that because medical practitioners had been registered since 1858, nursing should follow suit. Some felt nursing was not a profession, but rather a calling and that to register nurses would denigrate them to the status of mere laborers. Florence Nightingale was nursing's chief voice of opposition. Her power and opposition hindered passage of the Act until after her death. There is no single event that led to the call for registration or ultimately caused the Act to pass, but rather a complex interaction of historical and social events. This poster explores the history of nursing registration in England and how it was influenced by the Women's movement, the Industrial Revolution, Victorian ideas of philanthropy, and the vehement opposition of Florence Nightingale.