

Florence Nightingale and Documentation of Nursing Outcomes
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Problem: Florence Nightingale's contributions are often recognized in relation to reducing mortality in the Crimean War and establishing a school of modern nursing education. Nightingale's contributions to nursing extended well beyond her work in those two arenas. Nightingale felt strongly about the nurse's role in both gathering and using information about patients. Her knowledge of statistics, her record-keeping practices, and her reliance on analysis of data to inform her decisions was an important contribution to nursing. The profession has not, however, consistently followed her example, leaving early nurses to rely on tradition, rather than evidence-based practice. Studies at the beginning of the 20th century were largely related to education of nurses, and proposals for uniform ways to classify nursing outcomes came decades later.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to describe the documentation of nursing outcomes by Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War and the impact of that documentation on her subsequent development of nursing practice from 1854-1860.

Design: Social history was used to explore the documentation of nursing outcomes and its impact on patient care as reflected in Florence Nightingale's manuscripts, letters, and depiction of statistics in charts. Relevant materials of the era, including correspondence and documents, were used from the archival materials at the London Records Office and the Florence Nightingale Museum (London). Textbooks and biographies were used to provide background information and context.

Findings: Nightingale's knowledge of statistics, record-keeping practices, and her reliance on analysis of data to inform decisions are evident in her initial work in the Crimean War and beyond.

Conclusions and Implications for Practice: These practices represented the beginning of the practice of documenting nursing outcomes and planning care based on the data collected during the study period. These practices had a major impact on nursing beyond the period of the Crimean War and illustrate the importance of documentation of nursing outcomes.

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