

NURSING & MIDWIFERY IN MALTA A historical view

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Prehistoric Period

- Evidence of nursing care evidenced by skeletal archaeological remains showing adequately healed fractures of the femur
→ requires both good bone-setting practices and after nursing care
- Fertility Cult with ex-votive figurines showing pregnant women.

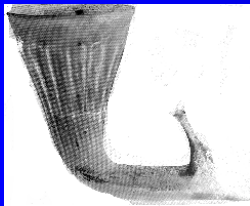


Classical Period



- Home nursing in practice as evidenced by

← 2nd - 1st century BC child feeding bottle (pottery); one associated of a 5 year-old child skeleton.



← 1st century BC adult drinking vessel

Medieval Period

- **Santo Spirito Hospital (Rabat, Malta)**

- c.1494: Employed a *spitaleri* functioning as a male nurse/cleaner
- c.1520: Replaced by *garzuna* or *servitriche* functioning as a female nurse/attendant
- post-1518: Employed *mammane* functioning as wet-nurses for foundlings
 - 1518 - 2 *mammane* employed
 - 1540 - 6 *mammane* employed
 - 1547 - 19 *mammane* employed

Hospitaller Period

● La Sacra Infermeria - Casetta (Valletta, Malta)

- Employed *guardiane* or nursing attendants
 - c.1658 - 14 *guardiane*
 - post 1770 - 17 *guardiane* divided into three categories: First Class (6), Second Class (8), Third Class (3)
- Employed *servienti* or servants
 - earliest employee recorded 1655
 - post 1770 - 30 *servienti*
- Also employed *forzati* and *bonavoglia* to carry out manual work in wards

• *continued*

Hospitaller Period

● La Sacra Infermeria - Casetta (Valletta, Malta)

- Also had specialised nursing attendants
 - *Donna per la tigna* (1) to administer treatment for ringworm
 - *spalmante* and *stufarola* (2) to administer treatment for syphilis - pre-1770
 - *spezialotta* to administer medicines
 - *Ospedaliere* and *sotto-ospedaliere* (2) to supervise management of foundlings and of
 - *balie della casa*: wet-nurses
 - *balie de fuori/nutrici forastieri*: foster-mothers

• *continued*

Hospitaller Period

- **La Sacra Infermeria - Casetta**
(Valletta, Malta)

- Other specialised nursing attendants
 - *Donna della mancia* to serve food
 - *Ostetrice* - midwife
 - *barberotti* - barber surgeons (6) and one female barberotta
 - *Braghista* - truss maker for hernae

Hospitaller Period

- **La Sacra Infermeria - Casetta**
(Valletta, Malta)

- Nursing duties were also performed by the Knights of St. John themselves.



Hospitaller Period

- **La Sacra Infermeria - Casetta**

(Valletta, Malta)

– Nursing varied depending on finances of the Order, deteriorating in later years.

- *“The tending of the sick was carried by knights and servants....Any slovenliness was met with severe punishment.”*

German Count George Albert of Erbach, 1617

- *“the patients....were served by the most dirty, ragged and unfeeling and inhuman persons I ever saw.”*

English philanthropist John Howard, 1786

Legislative Control

Midwifery & Nursing

Legislative Control of Midwifery

- *Pre-1530: Medical Practice regulated by ordinance of Roger II (1140) and expanded by Frederick II (1224). These regulations did not contain laws dealing with the practice of midwifery.*
- *1530: The Knights of St. John in Rhodes had similar regulations which they introduced to Malta. These again did not have any reference to midwifery.*

Legislative Control of Midwifery

- *First legal enactment: 1624*
- *Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical authorities attempted to ensure good moral practice of midwives by the requirement of a bishop's licence (valid until 1906) and the workings of the Inquisitional & Episcopal Courts*
- *1574 & 1625: parish priests instructed to teach midwives the proper administration of baptism. 1703: midwives were to be examined by parish priests at least twice a year about rites of baptism, abortion & caesarean section.*

Legislative Control of Midwifery Vital event registration

- *Responsibility of the Parish Priests defined by Synod of Augsburg 1548*
- *Baptismal registers in Malta: Mdina post-1539 [38 previous folios missing covering 1528-1538]; Naxxar post-1546; Birgu post-1552; Birmiftuh post-1556*

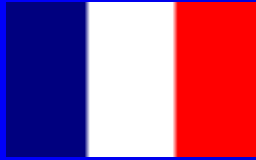
Legislative Control of Midwifery

- **LEGAL ENACTMENTS**
- *Protomedical decrees:*
 - 2 August 1624*
 - 19 June 1662*
 - 24 September 1722*
- *Vilhena Code 1724*
- *de Rohan Code 1784*
- *No woman was allowed to practice as midwife unless she had been examined and approved by the Protomedicus and granted the requisite licence which required renewal by every subsequent Protomedicus. An official register of approved midwives was kept at the Court of Law.*

Legislative Control of Midwifery

- **FRENCH RULE**

- *decree of
24 August 1798*



- *Doctor or midwife assisting at a birth were obliged to present a certificate of birth within 24 hours to the municipality under penalty of suspension of practice and the infliction of a fine and imprisonment.*



Legislative Control of Midwifery

- *de Rohan Code remained in force with modifications: eg certification by Civil Commissioner (1813) and certification by Medical Committee (1821)*

- *1872 Police Laws*

- *1813: Teresa Falletti, a midwife from Valletta, was advertising her certification by the Civil Commissioner to allow her to practice her profession.*

- *1821: Midwives, together with medical, surgical and pharmacy practitioners, were required to have a certificate of compitance from the then appointed Medical Committee in lieu of Protomedicus to enable them to practice their profession.*

Legislative Control of Midwifery

- *1872 Police Laws modified in subsequent years*
- *1883: legislation introduced against use of birthing chair*
- *1894: midwives were required to call in assistance in cases of difficult or protracted labour. They could not make use of any instruments including the labour chair, and could not prescribe or administer ergot of rye or other strong medication, or order blood letting.*

Legislative Control of Midwifery

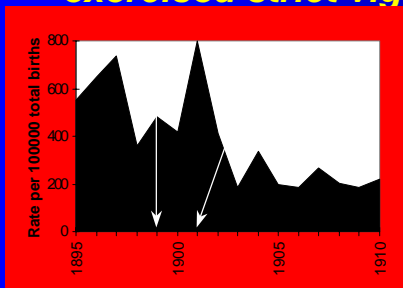
- *1899: A detailed set of regulations to be observed by midwives was first published. Detailed the care which the attending midwife was bound to give to the parturient mother, including specific instructions for asepsis. The midwife was also duty bound to attend the delivered woman for eight days after delivery to identify the development of puerperal sepsis.*

Legislative Control of Midwifery

- **1901: Second Sanitary Law published**
Midwives were required to obtain a licence from the Head of Government after obtaining a certificate of competence from the Medical Board. Every midwife was required to call for assistance and to report any cases of puerperal sepsis. Midwives were barred from performing any surgical procedures, and were required within five days to notify the officer charged with drawing up the acts of birth of all the deliveries conducted by them.

Legislative Control of Midwifery

Enactments contributory towards improving midwifery services. Department of Health exercised strict vigilance.



**INCIDENCE OF
PUERPERAL SEPSIS
1895-1910**

Contraventions Jan 1901-Mar 1911

- **2nd Sanitary Law 1901**
 - *Art.45: failure to call for assistance.....2
 - *Art.48: not reporting for disinfection2
 - *Art.53: failure to report births.....19
- **Midwifery Reg.189931**

Legislative Control of Midwifery

- **1918/1922/1951: Midwifery Regulations**
Revised: Amplified the previous ones with regards to the precautions necessary to prevent sepsis. They also listed the situations where the midwife was duty bound to call in a physician. These situations included all cases of abortion, of illness of the mother or child, or of any abnormality occurring during pregnancy, labour or lying-in period. Midwives were not to follow any other occupation that was liable to be a source of infection.

Legislative Control of Midwifery

- *Midwifery practice today regulated by **Medical & Kindred Profession Ordinance**, which incorporates the various amendments to the Second Sanitary Laws 1901. The latest important changes regarding midwifery were introduced in 1973 when the **Nursing and Midwifery Board** was created. This Board is a disciplinary and advisory body and is responsible for keeping a Register of Midwives licensed to practice their profession by the president of Malta.*

Legislative Control of Nursing

- Control of Nursing initiated by regulations applied in Government hospitals.
 - May 1885 - decision that attending S.o.C. nuns should be certified nurses.
 - July 1885 - first group of qualified nuns. Given "officer" status. Duties: nursing, supervision of lay nurses, administrative duties (keeping of instruments, diets).
- 1936 Enactment of Ord. VIII to set up register of nurses and set standards of nursing.
- Nursing practice today regulated by **Medical & Kindred Profession Ordinance**. The **Nursing and Midwifery Board** was created in 1973.

Education

Midwifery & Nursing

Midwifery Training

- **Pre-19th century:** Apprenticeship usually family tradition.
- **1772:** First suggestion to start course of midwifery proposed by Dr. Giuseppe Antonio Creni. No action taken since midwives were considered too ignorant to gain any benefits from the course of studies.
- **1802:** Dr. Francesco Butigieg appointed Teacher of Obstetrics at the Women's Hospital. School however functioned very erratically.

Midwifery Training

- **1854:** School re-opened but clinical material was scarce.
- **1868:** Re-organization of School of Practical Midwifery. Eight students. Lecture twice weekly for 16 months. Covered principles of midwifery, puerperal care and infant care. Qualifying examination. Subsequent courses hampered by illiteracy.
- **1883:** Lecture notes published in Maltese by Prof. S.L. Pisani "*Ktieb il Qabla*"

Midwifery Training

- **1885:** Artificial body purchased to assist teaching.
- **1886-87:** Lecture notes published in Maltese & English by Prof. GB Schembri.
- **1907:** Midwifery students had to follow course for Hospital Attendants and pass examination before sitting for theoretical examination in Midwifery.
- **1915:** Diploma of Midwifery introduced by University.

Midwifery Training

- **1949:** School of Midwifery taken over by Department of Health
- **1958-70:** No courses organized due to lack of applicants. Interested individuals proceeded to U.K. for training.
- **1970:** School of Midwifery opened at Nursing School. Course aimed at SRNs and lasted one year.
- **1990:** University Course at Institute of Health set up.

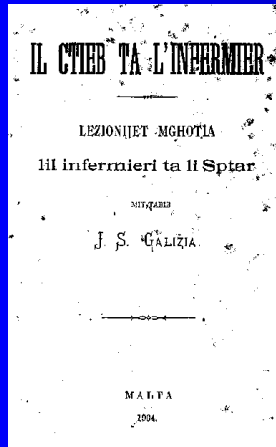
Nursing Studies

- pre-1882 - Apprenticeship usually family tradition.
- 1882 - First training programme initiated by Dr. T. Bonnici at the Central Hospital (Floriana, Malta). Participants remained “*generally illiterate*”.
- 1887 - Instructions that S.o.C. nuns to teach the lay nurses how to attend upon the patients.

Nursing Studies

- 1895 - School for the Training of Nurses re-organised - 12 students joined the course of lectures given 3 weekly by the Director of the School. Examination at end of Course. Granted Certificate of Efficiency as Nurses.
 - *Course of Studies*: *bed-making, attendane of medical & surgical cases, use of thermometer & catheter, methods of massage, pre-operative preparation of patients, assistance in impending anaesthetic deaths.*
- Redesignation of nursing staff into **NURSE** (if certified) and **SERVANT** (if uncertified).

Nursing Studies



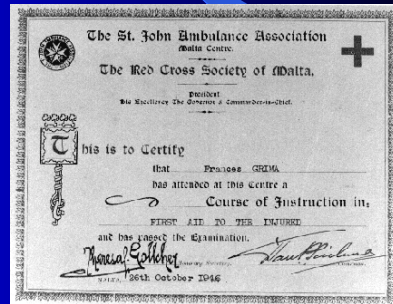
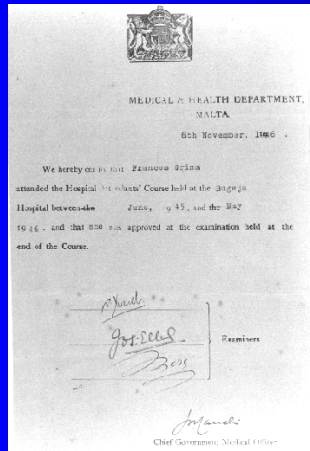
- 1904 - first illustrated nursing guide in Maltese published by J.S. Galizia “*Il ctieb ta l’infermier*” +218p.

Nursing Studies

- 1934 Standards of teaching not upkept. Syllabus described as “*too elementary*” and the practical training as “*inadequate*”.
- 1937 New St. Luke’s School of Nursing set up for lay nurses and S.o.C. nuns - Sister Tutor: English-trained Nurse Ms. L.M. Doherty.
- Refresher course for a number of Sisters of Charity serving at the Central Hospital.
- First course: October 1938 - six S.o.C. nuns. In 1939 - second course 15 S.o.C. nuns.
- Studies interrupted by 2nd World War; students sent to Emergency Hospitals resumed 1942 with 12 S.O.C. - 6 certified in 1945.

Nursing Studies

- *Various certificates awarded to nurse Francis Grima 1945-46*



Nursing Studies

- **1946: Sr. Aldegonda Farrugia trained in London to qualify as a Sister Tutor. Enabled the re-opening of the School of Nurses.**
- **The first pupils - 3 lay females & 4 S.o.C.**
- **1946: 6 S.o.C. proceeded to England for a three-year course of training in General Nursing.**
- **1947 Nursing Standards raised to those of British Nursing Schools.**

Nursing Studies

- 1952 Recognition of State Registered Nurses [SRN] by the General Nursing Council (U.K.)
- 1951-56: 57 nurses qualified; 32 (incl 13 S.o.C.) in the government hospitals. Total qualified nurses in Malta - 87.
- 1965 New Nursing School opened in the grounds of St. Luke's Hospital, Malta
- 1977 Suspension of GNC (UK) recognition as a result of doctor's trade unionistic action which resulted also in suspension of the M.D. (Malta) by General Medical Council (U.K.)

Nursing Studies

- 1987 Establishment of Institute of Health Care under auspices of the University.
 - First course run by IHC:
B.Sc. Nursing Studies with first group of nurses completing their studies in June 1992.
 - This course was followed by courses leading to
 - *Diploma in Nursing Studies*
 - *B.Sc. Nursing Studies (Hons.)*
 - *Certificate in Nursing*
 - *Diploma in Psychiatric Nursing*