

A note on nursing didactics according to Morgagni (1682-1771)

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15520/ijnd.2016.vol6.iss6.158.11>

Abstract: It is an axiom that the “truth” of today is likely to have its origin in yester years! What of “didactics?” As defined in Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, it means “systematic instruction;” it dated back to 1800. Therefore, is it possible to have any meaningful historical glimpse of didactics with special reference to Nursing? This is the purpose of this historical note dealing with Morgagni’s meaningful memorandum.

Key words: Nursing, didactics, health, history, Morgagni

INTRODUCTION

Moser¹ took the trouble to editorialize on the significance of the “truths” of today having their roots in yester years. Therefore, let us consider the very word, “Didactics.” The Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary² defines it as “systematic instruction” and dates its origin in the English Language as 1800. Since this Journal is all about Nursing Didactics, is there an interesting historical link between the healthy nurse and the ill patient? The answer is provided in this Note.

HISTORICAL TEXT

One of the greatest physicians that wrote plentifully was the very Italian, Giovanni Baptiste Morgagni (1682-1771).³ Now, I have been interested in the history of medicine right from a year of qualifying at the Glasgow University, Scotland.^{4,5} Therefore, what did my Historical Collection reveal about our present topic in terms of the nurse’s feeding of a patient? It is as follows:

I took particular care also to have a nurse who was in good health, and ordered her to make use of proper aliments, and as much as possible to avoid variety of them; which circumstance, when neglected, feels to be the only reason, why the milk of women is not better than the milk of other animals for medical purposes; although even the ancient physicians, and in particular Euryphon and Herodotus, who are commended by Galen, “preferred it to others in consumptive disorders, as it was familiar to us, and of the same nature with ourselves.” By observing this regimen very strictly, from the end of November to the middle of May, the patient was so far recovered as to be extremely well for sixteen years after.

DISCUSSION

I am persuaded, as was the famous Australian scientist, Macfarlane Burnet,⁶ that it is necessary to do research by starting with finding out the roots of the particular problem. Accordingly, this Note supplies, I hope, an apt account of an exemplary 1842 experience of nursing with special reference to her good health and professional performance.

CONCLUSION

Lo and behold! There is Morgagni’s dictum on the didactics of Nursing. In sum, it is that the “good health” of the Nurse is a desideratum!

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