

WHY NURSES WEEK IS ALWAYS CELEBRATED IN MAY

In November of 1854, during the darkest days of the Crimean War, Florence Nightingale took 38 nurses to care for British casualties at the Scutari Barrack Hospital in Turkey.

- » Florence wrote home that conditions were so atrocious the place truly was “the kingdom of hell.”
- » During Florence’s first months at Scutari the nurse-to-patient ratio was 1 nurse to 75 patients.
- » Cholera and typhus were epidemic, and because of the frequency of amputations Florence estimated that the average patient had 2.9 limbs.
- » The hospital was filthy and contaminated; hand-washing compliance was 0%.
- » That first winter the poor blokes who’d taken a bullet for their queen suffered a 50% mortality rate.
- » With thousands of sick and dying soldiers at Scutari it was impossible for Florence to personally care for each one, but her solicitousness and compassion earned her the title “the lady with the lamp” and it was said that soldiers would “kiss her shadow” as she passed by in the night.

By the time Florence and her nurses went home at the end of the war 21 months later:

- » She had transformed that “kingdom of hell” into a well-run and clinically excellent medical facility with a mortality rate lower than that of London’s civilian hospitals.
- » Defined what it means to be a nurse and established nursing as a true profession, a mission she continued working on with establishment of the Nightingale School of Nursing in London.
- » Set such high standards for nursing practice, which were reinforced in her book *Notes on Nursing* and in her letters to graduates of the Nightingale School, that they set the stage for nursing being the world’s most trusted profession ever since.
- » Established the revolutionary principle that medical care should be based on a patient’s clinical needs and not their rank, religion, or social status, which has guided ethical medical practice ever since.
- » Literally created a blueprint for the hospital as we know it today, which she further refined in her book *Notes on Hospitals*; this blueprint guided hospital construction for the next century.
- » Established a standard of care for soldiers and veterans that was responsible for a sea change in military healthcare beginning with the American Civil War and continuing through the present day.

These are challenging times in healthcare, but if we embrace the “Proceed Until Apprehended” that guided Florence Nightingale in her work, then we can keep glowing the lamp she first lit at the Scutari Barrack Hospital.

HAPPY NURSES WEEK FROM THE TEAM AT VALUES COACH!

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