

## HISTORICAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Concepción Arenal: The first visiting nurse in Spain

*Concepción Arenal: Primera enfermera visitadora en España*

*Concepción Arenal: A primeira enfermeira visitadora de Espanha*

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Received: 07.06.23

Accepted: 27.02.24

## Abstract

**Background:** During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the economic transformations caused by the Industrial Revolution led to a rise in pauperism among vulnerable populations. This phenomenon negatively impacted the health of these populations.

**Objective:** To conduct a historiographical review of Concepción Arenal's thinking from a nursing perspective.

**Methodology:** This social, historical, and qualitative research focused on the delivery of holistic nursing care to vulnerable individuals based on Concepción Arenal's social thinking. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources.

**Results:** Arenal's book "*La beneficencia, la filantropía y la caridad*" advocated for the delivery of nursing care at home. To oppose the repulsion caused by hospitals and nursing staff in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Arenal supported that nursing care should be carried out by well-educated and trained professional nurses.

**Conclusion:** Arenal was a highly accomplished woman in the field of law. Currently, her ideas are gaining traction within the field of health, particularly in the areas of social and community health.

**Keywords:** concepción Arenal; social conditions; nursing care; history of nursing

## Resumen

**Marco contextual:** Durante el siglo XIX, la transformación económica derivada de la revolución industrial provocó el pauperismo en las personas vulnerables, hecho que les deterioró su salud.

**Objetivo:** Revisar historiográficamente el pensamiento de Concepción Arenal Ponte, desde una perspectiva enfermera.

**Metodología:** Investigación social, histórica y cualitativa, relacionada con los cuidados de enfermería proporcionados de una forma holística a la persona vulnerable, a través del pensamiento social de Concepción Arenal. Recopilación de información: en fuentes primarias y secundarias.

**Resultados:** Su obra "*La beneficencia, la filantropía y la caridad*" es una defensa cerrada del cuidado del paciente en su domicilio. Y para evitar la repulsa que, por entonces, causaban los hospitales y el personal de enfermería, Arenal defendió que dicho cuidado fuese realizado por enfermeras profesionales bien formadas y entrenadas.

**Conclusión:** El pensamiento de Arenal, mujer muy destacada dentro del campo del derecho, comienza a ser actualmente muy relevante dentro del campo sanitario y cobra un especial interés tanto en el área social como en el área de la salud comunitaria.

**Palabras clave:** concepción Arenal; condiciones sociales; atención de enfermería; historia de la enfermería

## Resumo

**Enquadramento:** A transformação económica provocada pela revolução industrial, originou inúmeros avanços no campo da tecnologia, no entanto, a nível sociológico determinou a emergência do pauperismo entre as pessoas vulneráveis, deteriorando a sua saúde.

**Objetivo:** Efetuar uma revisão histórica sobre o pensamento de *Concepción Arenal* a partir da perspectiva da enfermagem.

**Metodologia:** Estudo social, histórico e qualitativo com foco na provisão de cuidados de enfermagem holísticos baseados no pensamento social de Concepción Arenal. Os dados foram recolhidos em fontes primárias e secundárias.

**Resultados:** O seu livro "*La beneficencia, la filantropía y la caridad*" constitui-se como uma defesa empenhada dos cuidados ao paciente em casa. Arenal defende que esses cuidados deveriam ser realizados por enfermeiros profissionais bem treinados de modo evitar a aversão causada pelos hospitais e pessoal de enfermagem na época.

**Conclusão:** Arenal foi uma mulher de grande sucesso na sua área do direito. Atualmente, as suas ideias e contributo estão a ganhar relevância no campo da saúde, particularmente nas áreas da saúde social e comunitária.

**Palavras-chave:** concepción Arenal; condições sociais; cuidados de enfermagem; história da enfermagem



**How to cite this article:** Dios-Aguado, M., Rodríguez-Montejaño, J., Peres, M. A., Aperibense, P. G., Cotto-Andino, M., & Queirós, P. (2024). Concepción Arenal: The first visiting nurse in Spain. *Revista de Enfermagem Referência*, 6(3, Supl. 1), e31673. <https://doi.org/10.12707/RV123.79.31673>



## Introduction

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the economic transformations caused by the Industrial Revolution led to innumerable technological advances. However, on the social level, it led to the emergence of pauperism (Clemente, 1999).

Paupers were individuals who lived in overcrowded, unsanitary, and very poor urban neighborhoods, where even those with paying jobs could not afford to meet their basic needs (Arenal, 1897).

Therefore, when paupers lacked the protection of a wealthy family to assist them in earning their daily bread, they sold their bodies and used alcohol to escape their misery (Arenal, 1894). This phenomenon led to an increase in prostitution in city suburbs, venereal diseases, and alcoholism, and caused pauperism to be seen as a social scourge, with detrimental effects on the health and hygienic and nutritional habits of the poor, and inducing the loss of their moral and social values. As misery destroyed human dignity, individuals' education and morals were eroded (Dios-Aguado et al., 2023; Nightingale, 1894).

Concepción Arenal y Ponte was born in Ferrol on January 31, 1820, into a well-to-do family. Her father, a military man, lawyer, and proponent of liberal ideas, was imprisoned for disobedience to the absolutist monarchy of Ferdinand VII (Gómez-Blesa, 2023). After his release, he considered himself to be undervalued by others and developed a passion for study and moral rectitude. Concepción inherited her father's passion (Caballé, 2018). When her father became ill, the young Concepción lovingly and attentively cared for him until his death. She was only nine years old. Following this experience, Concepción was forced to move to the valley of Liébana, where her family had an estate (Arias-Bautista, 2021).

In 1834, Arenal was enrolled in a school for girls in Madrid. She attended school, dressed in simple and plain clothes, without any corset or ornaments (Caballé, 2018). This eccentricity caused significant tensions with her mother, as Concepción's ideals did not agree with the feminine archetype of that time (Gómez-Blesa, 2023). In 1841, her mother's death precipitated Concepción Arenal into an existential crisis. Arenal believed she was responsible for her mother's death due to the frequent arguments they had and her inability to care for her during her illness. To overcome this crisis, Arenal once again sought refuge in the valley of Liébana (Arias-Bautista, 2021; Caballé, 2018; Gómez-Blesa, 2023).

After this period, she returned to Madrid to complete her academic training and enrolled at the University. Dressed in male clothes (pants, frock coat, and scarf), Concepción Arenal attended classes in natural sciences, physics, medicine, and law. At the university, she met Fernando García Carrasco, a lawyer with liberal ideas. They became great friends and later married. Her husband always respected her unique way of dressing, and their married life was based on equality and mutual admiration (Arias-Bautista, 2021; Caballé, 2018; Gómez-Blesa, 2023).

In 1851, illness and misfortune struck Arenal's life again. Despite her constant care, Arenal's first-born daughter

died of hydrocephalus, and, two years later, her husband contracted tuberculosis. She dedicated herself to taking care of him and preventing the rest of the family from contracting the disease. However, despite her efforts, Concepción Arenal lost her beloved husband in 1857 (Caballé, 2018). The loss of her husband shattered her life and forced her to seek refuge in the Liébana Valley with her two young children (Gómez-Blesa, 2023).

In Potes, under the shadow of intense pain, she built a new project for her life. Around 1859 she began writing "*El manual del visitador del pobre*", and, in 1861, she published "*La beneficencia, la filantropía y la caridad*", a book on charity and philanthropy (Arias-Bautista, 2021). Writing gave her the strength to continue her life, brought her international recognition, awakened her moral rectitude, and rekindled her passion for helping those in need (Gómez-Blesa, 2023). Her work was based on the current of Krausist liberal thinking, which sought the individual's social and ethical regeneration (Caballé, 2018). Jesús de Monasterio, Giner de los Ríos, Gumersindo de Azcárate, Fernando de Castro, and Salustiano Olózaga belonged to this school of thinking and were close friends of Arenal throughout her life (Gómez-Blesa, 2023).

After overcoming the tragedy of her husband's death, and as an internationally recognized woman, Concepción Arenal met Juana de la Vega Martínez, Countess of Espoz y Mina, with whom she established a solid friendship that became the emotional and moral support of Arenal. She became the Countess's caregiver until her death from a heart attack in 1872 (Arias-Bautista, 2021; Caballé, 2018; Gómez-Blesa, 2023).

Concepción Arenal died in Vigo on February 4, 1893. Her epitaph contains the motto that accompanied her throughout her life: "*A la virtud, a una vida, a la ciencia*" (To virtue, to life, to science; Caballé, 2018).

Our study aims to conduct a historiographical review of Concepción Arenal's thinking from the perspective of nursing, as it has been widely analyzed in other fields, such as charity, social work, the penitentiary system, and law. However, within the field of nursing, her work has been little recognized and hardly analyzed, particularly in the areas of public and community health. Therefore, our study is based on the following hypothesis: Through her social thinking, Concepción Arenal promoted and advocated the idea that nursing care should be professional, high-quality, and holistic.

## Methodology

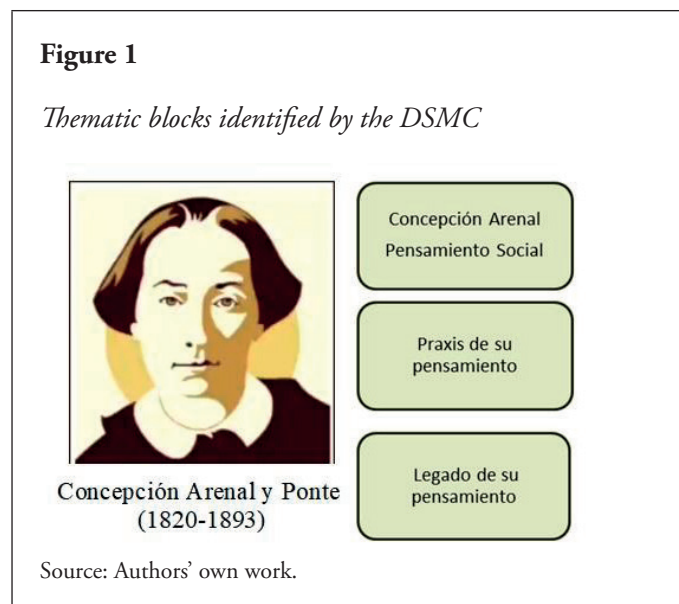
Our study is a historiographical review of Concepción Arenal's ideas from the perspective of nursing. As such, it can be considered a historical and qualitative research study. In the initial phase of our study, an exhaustive search was conducted for Concepción Arenal's work in the existing primary sources. These included the Archives of the Faculty of Medicine of the Complutense University of Madrid, the World Digital Library, the National Library of Spain, and the Documentation Center of the Spanish Red Cross. In the second phase of the

study, a secondary sources search was conducted using keywords as descriptors and Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT). Additionally, a thematic selection was made for the analysis of secondary sources, taking into account the importance and relevance of the topic. Based on these premises, a bibliographic search was performed in the following electronic databases: SciELO, Dialnet, Cuiden, MEDLINE/PubMed, JSTOR (an online repository of academic publications), CINAHL, Science Direct, and Google Scholar. In the third and final phase of our study, 20 documents (the maximum number of references allowed for this publication) were selected from the 63 found.

Regarding the ethical considerations of our study, it was necessary to request access to the documents in the archives of the Faculty of Medicine of the Complutense University of Madrid and the Documentation Center of

the Spanish Red Cross. This was to allow the collection of data from direct sources. After receiving the necessary authorizations, the documents were subjected to in-depth analysis.

The Dialectical Structural Model of Care (DSMC) was used as the data analysis method. It allowed our study to delve into the historical context that motivated Concepción Arenal's social thinking, which in turn led to multiple initiatives that, once put into practice, were able to solve pauperism and deliver holistic care to vulnerable individuals. The DSMC approach is based on the organization of data into structures or thematic blocks and the analysis of the relationships between them. In our study, it enabled the formation of three thematic blocks that provided a global insight into relevant historical events from a nursing perspective (Siles-González & Solano-Ruiz, 2016; see Figure 1).



A meticulous analysis was conducted on primary and secondary sources pertinent to the objective of our study. Researchers performed an inferential and critical interpretation of the data, resolving discrepancies in the choice and inclusion of studies by reaching consensus among the research team members. In selecting the bibliographical references, priority was given in Concepción Arenal's primary sources to books on care delivery to the person. In terms of the secondary sources, priority was given to texts whose subject corresponded to the three thematic blocks identified by the DSMC. These allowed for obtaining a global vision of the relevant historical phenomena from a cultural perspective.

During reference selection, 63 documents were consulted, of which 20 were selected for this research.

## Results and discussion

### Concepción Arenal's Social Thinking

From an early age, Concepción Arenal experienced significant adversity, first through her father's imprisonment

and then through his illness and subsequent death (Gómez-Blesa, 2023). This prolonged period of suffering undoubtedly shaped Arenal's character from her childhood. However, the death of her daughter followed by the death of her husband profoundly disrupted her life, compelling her to embark on a new life project that catalyzed her social thinking and hopes for the professionalization of nursing care (Caballé, 2018).

In Potes, while emotionally recuperating from her tragedies, she established a lifelong fraternal relationship with Jesús de Monasterio. He proposed that she founded the local women's branch of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, an organization dedicated to caring for and assisting those most vulnerable. Her involvement in this organization brought her back to life (Arias-Bautista, 2021). Moreover, it allowed Concepción Arenal to provide holistic care to those in need and be in direct contact with the pauper, which allowed her to witness the helplessness suffered by the vulnerable working-class people who did not have a well-to-do family to help them with their financial needs. She had experienced the same helplessness when her father, daughter, and



husband did not receive professional nursing care despite being seriously ill (Arias-Bautista, 2021; Caballé, 2018; Gómez-Blesa, 2023).

Concepción Arenal compiled her experience of providing holistic care to individuals in need in her book *“La beneficencia, la filantropía y la caridad”*. The book gained international recognition and became a reference to warn states of the circumstances that drove workers into poverty, even when they had a job (Arias, 2021; Caballé, 2018; Gómez, 2023). Arenal believed that the Spanish state had an obligation to provide its entire territory with the necessary resources and infrastructures to ensure that vulnerable individuals, both morally and physically, were not left without care. This should be provided not only by private charitable organizations but also by public institutions that could assist them with all their social and health needs (García-Carrasco, 1861).

In her work, *El pauperismo*, Concepción Arenal sought to raise awareness and alert society to the unsanitary, dehumanizing, and extremely vulnerable conditions endured by illiterate working-class people in the working-class neighborhoods of Spanish cities (Gómez-Blesa, 2023). Arenal considered that such circumstances perpetuated cholera, typhoid, and tuberculosis, pathologies that severely afflicted the pauper. Furthermore, the lack of health led to the loss of employment and, ultimately, the impoverishment of individuals and families due to the limited economic resources available to the working class, as well as the lack of social support (Arenal, 1897). In this context, Concepción Arenal's goal was to encourage the wealthier classes to demonstrate solidarity while raising their awareness of the need to provide the city suburbs with sanitary conditions. Arenal believed that this would be the most effective means of preventing poverty and safeguarding human dignity among the working class (Arias-Bautista, 2021).

Throughout her life, Concepción Arenal also advocated for the improvement of women's living conditions and their access to all levels of education (Arias-Bautista, 2021; Caballé, 2018; Gómez-Blesa, 2023). In her work *“La mujer del porvenir. La mujer de su casa”*, she denounced the theories that defended the inferiority of women based on biological grounds and called for women's education as the sole means of overcoming social exclusion (a phenomenon affecting the female condition since long ago). To change this context, she encouraged women to work, although she considered that not all jobs could be done by women (Arenal, 1895).

### **The Praxis of Concepción Arenal's Social Thinking**

Concepción Arenal understood the crucial importance of nursing care following the tragic loss of her two-year-old daughter to hydrocephalus and subsequently became aware of the significance of home nursing care after her husband died of tuberculosis. These two events led her to become a vocal advocate for the professionalization of nursing care, as neither of her two loved ones received holistic nursing care (Arias-Bautista, 2021; Caballé, 2018; Gómez-Blesa, 2023).

In her work *“La beneficencia, la filantropía y la caridad”*,

Arenal supported the expansion of home nursing care and its delivery by adequately trained professional nurses as a means of mitigating the aversion to hospitals and nursing staff that was prevalent at the time (Bernabeu-Mestre & Pérez, 1999; de Dios-Aguado et al., 2023). In this context, Arenal published *“El manual del visitador del pobre”*, which served as a guide for the delivery of holistic and quality nursing care in the context of the patient's home. In this book, Arenal also highlighted that having access to a person's home entailed gaining access to the most intimate aspect of their being, a fact that required the visitor to respect the beliefs and the human dignity of the person being visited at all times (Arenal, 1894). According to Arenal, it was essential for caregivers to perform their job with empathy and assertiveness, without making value judgments concerning the circumstances surrounding those being visited (Bernabeu-Mestre & Pérez, 1999; de Dios-Aguado et al., 2023; Pérez-Vico, 2018).

Concepción Arenal, who served as secretary general of the Ladies' Section of the Red Cross during the Second Carlist War in Spain, oversaw the operation of the blood hospital that this organization established in Miranda de Ebro (Arias-Bautista, 2021). At the hospital, the women volunteers, without any prior experience or training, provided holistic care to the injured. These women were able to overcome the enmity generated between the opposing sides by treating all injured individuals equally, regardless of military rank or ideology (de Dios-Aguado et al., 2021). After the war, Arenal continued to advocate for the professionalization of nursing care, a model that was already in place in institutions across the United Kingdom at the time (Arias-Bautista, 2021; de Dios-Aguado et al., 2021).

Throughout her life, Arenal maintained a large and diverse group of friends, among whom Juana de la Vega Martínez stood out. A widow like Arenal, Juana de la Vega Martínez also experienced the pain of losing her husband and knew the meaning of the word suffering. Arenal's and Martínez's life experiences inspired them to address the challenges faced by the pauper living in dehumanized and unsanitary city suburbs (Rubio et al., 2020). They did so through philanthropy, creating numerous projects to assist those in need and establishing and managing institutions, such as the *Asociación de Señoras de La Coruña*, the *Sociedad Protectora de los Niños Desamparados*, *Las Magdalenas* (a foundation created to visit women prisoners), and the *Sociedad Abolicionista*. They were also able to convince the Galician authorities to build a psychiatric hospital in Santiago de Compostela (Alvarez, 2020).

Another of Arenal's friendships worth mentioning was that with Queen Maria Victoria dal Pozzo della Cisterna during the brief reign of Amadeo of Savoy in Spain. This friendship led to the establishment of an *Asilo de Lavanderas* in Madrid, an institution that provided care for the children of washerwomen while they washed clothes in the Manzanares River. Additionally, both women established a hospice for abandoned children and a boarding school for the children of female cigarette workers employed at the tobacco factory (Rubio et al., 2020). Their activism and philanthropy led them to establish social and health

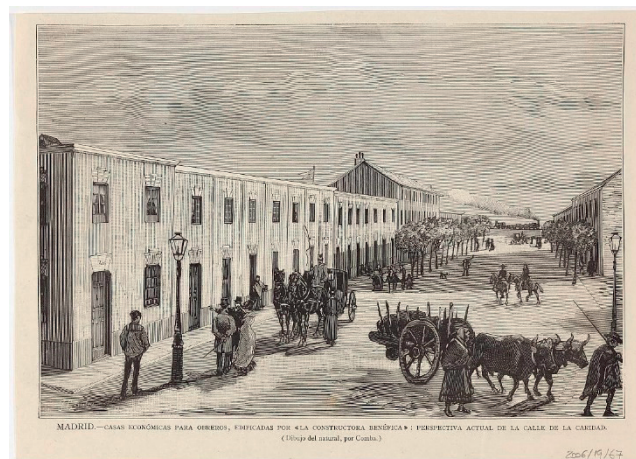
networks for families in different suburbs of Madrid. The so-called *sopa económica* (a type of soup kitchen) served as a model for home-based care, distributing food rations to working-class families in economic need. This assistance aimed to relieve hunger and provide holistic care to those in need to prevent the deterioration of their health, which opened the door to pauperism and subsequently to disease. (Arias-Bautista, 2021; Rubio et al., 2020). At the same time, Arenal established the *Constructora Benéfica* with the purpose of alleviating the distress experienced by working-class families when the last day of their tenancies came and they lacked the economic resources necessary to meet their obligations. This entity was established with the financial backing of the Spanish financial sector and the

substantial donations of numerous friends of Concepción Arenal, including the sum of 125,000 pesetas made by Countess Krasinski (Caballé, 2018).

Despite the legal difficulties it encountered, the *Constructora Benéfica* built its first twenty-four single-family houses in the *Pacífico* neighborhood of Madrid in 1877 for workers of the *Compañía del Ferrocarril del Mediodía*. Later, in 1883, a second building campaign was carried out in the suburbs of *Cuatro Caminos y Guindalera* (Rubio, 2009). The *Constructora Benéfica* closed around 1915, but during its 40 years of activity, it built social housing for rent in several neighborhoods. All houses had the same structure: a kitchen, two bedrooms, and an outside toilet next to the courtyard (Arias-Bautista, 2021; see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Madrid - Low-cost housing for workers built by the Constructora Benéfica*



Source: *La Ilustración Española y Americana XXVII (11): 172*. ISSN 1889-8394. [https://es.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:1883-03\\_22,\\_La\\_Ilustraci%C3%B3n\\_Espa%C3%B1ola\\_y\\_Americana,\\_Madrid,\\_Casas\\_econ%C3%B3micas\\_para\\_obreros,\\_edificadas\\_por\\_%C2%ABLa\\_Constructora\\_Ben%C3%A9fica%C2%BB,\\_perspectiva\\_actual\\_de\\_la\\_calle\\_de\\_la\\_Caridad](https://es.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:1883-03_22,_La_Ilustraci%C3%B3n_Espa%C3%B1ola_y_Americana,_Madrid,_Casas_econ%C3%B3micas_para_obreros,_edificadas_por_%C2%ABLa_Constructora_Ben%C3%A9fica%C2%BB,_perspectiva_actual_de_la_calle_de_la_Caridad)

### The Legacy of Concepción Arenal's Social Thinking

Concepción Arenal served as the editor of *La Voz de la Caridad* for 14 years. During this period, the magazine played an instrumental role in denouncing the poor sanitary conditions of the population, the lack of protection for children, slavery, the white slave trade, prostitution, and other social problems. The magazine served as a platform for advocating for the need for women to acquire skills and education that would enable them to find a job or trade outside the domestic sphere. It also demanded that education should be provided to cultivate all the faculties of morality and human thinking (Arias-Bautista, 2021; Gómez-Blesa, 2023). In her work "*La mujer del porvenir. La mujer de su casa*", Arenal lists the professions that she considers to enhance the maternal role of self-sacrifice and devotion to others, and suggests that these are suitable for women as she assumes that the feelings of pity and

compassion are inherent to the female soul. Thus, she considers the professions of teacher, governess, doctor, nurse, pharmacist, and childminder, among others, to be suitable for women (Arenal, 1895). Moreover, she supports that these professions provided women with an excellent opportunity to pursue university studies and obtain paid jobs, whose salaries could contribute to the financial solvency of their family units. This would undoubtedly allow women to sustain their independence if their marital status changed, they became widowed, or remained single. Furthermore, it would prevent them, in the event of such a change, from falling into pauperism, which was a common occurrence during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Arias-Bautista, 2021; Caballé, 2018; Gómez-Blesa, 2023).

Concepción Arenal's aspirations were fulfilled when King Amadeo of Savoy signed a Royal Order on September

2, 1871, granting Spanish women access to university. Nevertheless, it was not until the 1872-73 academic year that María Elena Maseras y Ribera enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine in Barcelona, and, two years later, María Dolores Aleu i Riera, followed by Martina Castells Ballespí (Álvarez, 2007). Despite having achieved legal access to the university, the three female students encountered numerous bureaucratic challenges before they could obtain their official medical degrees. Dolors Aleu I Riera and Martina Castells Ballespí also faced a similar pattern of obstacles before attaining their doctoral degrees in Medicine in 1882 (Nogueiras, 2019). Aleu's doctoral thesis, entitled "*De la necesidad de encaminar por una nueva senda la educación higiénico-moral de la mujer*", was based on Concepción Arenal's thinking about the female condition, and Castells Ballespí's thesis was entitled "*Educación física, moral e intelectual que debe darse a la mujer para que ésta contribuya en grado máximo a la perfección y la dicha de la humanidad*" (Álvarez, 2007; García, 2019).

In particular, Aleu put into practice the legacy of Concepción Arenal. Her inaugural work entitled "*Consejos a una madre sobre el régimen, limpieza, vestido, sueño, ejercicio, y entretenimiento de los niños*" (García, 2019) aimed at improving women's quality of life. Her extensive professional career was dedicated to addressing the challenges faced by women from all social classes, from bourgeois women to prostitutes. Inspired by Concepción Arenal's ideas, Aleu founded the *Academia de Ciencias, Artes y Oficios de la Mujer* on May 2, 1885, dedicated to providing educational opportunities for women from childhood onwards (Álvarez, 2007).

Throughout her life, Concepción Arenal advocated for the delivery of holistic nursing care to vulnerable individuals, promoted the professionalization of nursing care, and considered the nursing profession suitable for the female condition (Arias-Bautista, 2021; Caballé, 2018; Gómez-Blesa, 2023). However, Arenal would not see her aspirations for the professionalization of nursing care met during her lifetime, as it was only on May 7, 1915, that King Alfonso XIII promulgated the Royal Order establishing the title of "nurse." Nevertheless, her ideas exerted a profound influence on the deontological corpus of Spanish nursing (de Dios-Aguado et al., 2023). Queen Victoria Eugenia de Battenberg, wife of King Alfonso XIII and President of the Spanish Red Cross, established the *Escuela Central de la Cruz Roja* in 1918 (Clemente, 1999; Espejo, 2018). Following the recommendations of the *Liga de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja* and influenced by the social thinking of Concepción Arenal, who supported that nursing care should be professional, high-quality, and holistically provided to those suffering, Queen Victoria Eugenia de Battenberg founded in 1929 the *Cuerpo de Enfermeras Profesionales Visitadoras de la Cruz Roja* (Corps of Visiting Professional Nurses of the Red Cross). This organization aimed to implement the home nursing care model described by Arenal in "*El manual del visitador del pobre*" (Clemente, 1999; de Dios-Aguado et al., 2023). It is worth noting that this model was meticulously executed by nurses trained at the

*Escuela Central de la Cruz Roja*, among whom stood out nurses Carmen Angolotti y Mesa, Mercedes Milá Nolla, Inés Oyarzábal Smith, María Benavente Barbará, and Aurora Mas de Gaminde (Espejo, 2018). These nurses were responsible for disseminating throughout Spain the model of delivery of holistic nursing care to vulnerable individuals and consolidating Arenal's legacy in Spanish nursing. For this reason, in 1935, Concepción Arenal was recognized as the first visiting nurse in Spain. Today, she is also considered the first Spanish family and community nurse as, with her empathy and assertiveness, the very essence of nursing care, she was able to deliver holistic care to those who suffered in silence inside their homes (de Dios-Aguado et al., 2023).

## Conclusion

Our review of Concepción Arenal's ideas, based on both primary and secondary sources and focused on the nursing perspective, provides valuable insight into her life and work. Arenal's work significantly influenced patient care. Her ideas led the way to the professionalization of nursing in Spain during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its specialization through the creation of professional visiting nurses. In Spain, Arenal has always been considered a highly prominent woman in the field of law and only recently has the relevance of her ideas begun to be acknowledged in the field of health, particularly in the areas of social and community health. Arenal's efforts to promote women's education and employment outside the home were rewarded on September 2, 1871, when women were permitted to attend university. Her tenacity was rewarded and reflected in the work of María Dolores Aleu i Riera, and her unwavering advocacy for the implementation of professional nursing care, coupled with her commitment to ensuring that nurses were adequately trained, ultimately led to the establishment of the university degree in nursing in Spain on May 7, 1915. Although the Industrial Revolution brought with it pauperism, Concepción Arenal's social and humanist thinking contributed to mitigating the pain of those suffering, improving women's conditions, providing decent housing for the needy, covering the economic needs of the paupers and their families, and preventing hunger among vulnerable people and prostitutes. Arenal believed that hunger fueled prostitution, the consumption of alcohol, and the loss of human dignity.

Concepción Arenal's legacy of thinking can be correlated with the recommendations that Nightingale formulated on rural health, which focused on the person, the environment, health, and care. Nightingale's vision of nursing was based on the relationship between concepts and values, and her mission was to put scientific knowledge and acquired skills into practice to achieve quality care for the sick. Arenal also lived by this maxim throughout her life, calling for the professionalization of nursing care and the delivery of high-quality nursing care in the patient's home by professional nurses. As nursing researchers, we are immensely grateful to Concepción



Arenal for her legacy of caring for the sick and dying, with humanity and quality. We also declare our admiration for her nursing paradigm, which should be the driving force of our professional activity. Therefore, we conclude that the hypothesis formulated in our study is resolved as it is evident that Concepción Arenal, through her social thinking, promoted and defended the view that nursing care should be professional, high-quality, and provided holistically to the person.

### Acknowledgments

Our profound gratitude to those who provided access to primary sources and assisted with the research process.

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