

HISTORICAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Portuguese Books from the 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries, with Reference to Male and Female Nurses

Livros Portugueses dos Séculos XVI, XVII e XVIII, com Referência a Enfermeiros e Enfermeiras

Libros Portugueses de los Siglos XVI, XVII y XVIII, con Referencia a Enfermeros y Enfermeras

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Abstract

Background: The development of Portuguese nursing unfolded across three periods: differentiation, professionalization, and the consolidation of knowledge. Books containing monastic rules and constitutions, as well as manuals for nurses, constitute an integral part of this process.

Objective: To identify publications in Portuguese consisting of monastic rules and customs, as well as manuals for nurses, from the early modern period, and to describe and situate the material identified within the professionalization movement of Portuguese nursing.

Methodology: Research was conducted in repositories and digital archives to identify books published in Portugal between the 16th and 18th centuries that are relevant to the history of nursing. The sources were subjected to critical analysis, contextual framing, and historical interpretative construction.

Results: Five books published in Portuguese during the 16th century containing monastic rules and constitutions with references to nurses were identified, along with three instructional manuals from the 17th and 18th centuries.

Conclusion: Nursing knowledge was progressively systematized and expressed in written form through books. This emerging and developing body of knowledge is situated within a long process of differentiation in the history of Portuguese nursing.

Keywords: nursing; history of nursing; manuals as topic; nurse instruction; rare books

Resumo

Enquadramento: O desenvolvimento da enfermagem portuguesa faz-se em três períodos: diferenciação; profissionalização e consolidação de saberes. Os livros com regras e constituições monásticas e os manuais são parte constituinte desse processo.

Objetivo: Identificar publicações, em português, de regras e costumes monásticos, e de manuais para enfermeiros do início da idade moderna. Descrever e situar o material encontrado no movimento de profissionalização da enfermagem portuguesa.

Metodologia: Pesquisa em repositórios e arquivos digitais de livros editados em Portugal, nos séculos XVI, XVII e XVIII, relevantes para a História da Enfermagem. Análise crítica destas fontes, seu enquadramento, e construção interpretativa histórica.

Resultados: Encontrados cinco livros, editados em português, com Regras e Constituições Monásticas, século XVI, com referência a enfermeiros, e três manuais de instrução para os séculos XVII e XVIII.

Conclusão: O saber dos enfermeiros vai-se sistematizando e expressando-se de forma escrita, em livros. Saberes em formação e desenvolvimento, enquadrados num período longo de diferenciação da enfermagem portuguesa.

Palavras-chave: enfermagem; história da enfermagem; manuais como assunto; instrução para enfermeiros; livros raros

Resumen

Marco contextual: El desarrollo de la enfermería portuguesa se divide en tres períodos: diferenciación, profesionalización y consolidación de conocimientos. Los libros con reglas y constituciones monásticas y los manuales forman parte integrante de este proceso.

Objetivo: Identificar publicaciones, en portugués, sobre normas y costumbres monásticas, y manuales para enfermeros de principios de la Edad Moderna. Describir y situar el material encontrado en el movimiento de profesionalización de la enfermería portuguesa.

Metodología: Investigación en repositórios y archivos digitales de libros editados en Portugal en los siglos XVI, XVII y XVIII, relevantes para la historia de la enfermería. Análisis crítico de estas fuentes, su contexto y construcción interpretativa histórica.

Resultados: Se encontraron cinco libros, editados en portugués, con reglas y constituciones monásticas, del siglo XVI, con referencia a enfermeros, y tres manuales de instrucción para los siglos XVII y XVIII.

Conclusión: Los conocimientos de los enfermeros se sistematizan y se expresan por escrito en libros. Conocimientos en formación y desarrollo, enmarcados en un largo período de diferenciación de la enfermería portuguesa.

Palabras clave: enfermería; historia de la enfermería; manuales como asunto; instrucción para enfermeras; libros raros

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Introduction

The history of nursing in Portugal is constructed from multiple sources. Nothing is alien, as nothing can be alien to the pursuit of truth regarding events of relevant interest for interpreting historical development. As Coelho (2021) notes, “the historian describes, they do not resurrect what once was... they produce discourses through which they seek to capture, within the realm of intellect, the essence of events” (p. 14).

Understanding what nursing is today requires clarification of its development over the course of centuries. Documentary sources expressed in contemporary books represent only part of this complex development involving differentiation, professionalization, and the consolidation of nursing knowledge and practice.

Nursing in Portugal, like that of every country within its own context, results from a long temporal process of diachronic and synchronic development. This process has enabled professional advances and setbacks, as well as the structuring of nursing knowledge. Three major periods can be identified: differentiation, professionalization, and consolidation of knowledge. The period of differentiation occurred from the beginning of Portuguese nationhood in the 12th century to the late 19th century. The period of professionalization took place between the late 19th century and the late 20th century. The third period of consolidation of knowledge extends from the late 20th century to the present day.

These three periods, although not rigidly defined, are marked by key milestones: from the earliest references to specific individuals identified as nurses in the 12th and 13th centuries; to the emergence of the term designating the collective activity, “nursing,” in 1896; and the establishment of the first formal nursing school in 1881 at the Hospitals of the University of Coimbra. From the late 19th century to the end of the 20th century, milestones include the Regulation of Nursing Practice (REPE) in 1996 and the establishment of the Portuguese Nursing Regulator — *Ordem dos Enfermeiros* — in 1998. From that point to the present, nursing has achieved full integration into higher education, theoretical and epistemological affirmation, and the creation of nursing science research units.

Differentiation, normalization, and professionalization are understood as processes through which an occupation can project itself over time (Fassin, 1996). This perspective is complemented by Freidson’s (1984) view, which presents “credentialism, expertise/knowledge, and autonomy as the basis for an occupation to be recognized as a profession” (Bellaguarda & Queirós, 2023, p. 2).

Regarding the differentiation period, it is important to examine the process of functional differentiation within monasteries; the earliest references to male and female nurses; monastic and non-monastic medieval nursing wards and hospitals; remuneration practices; books concerning male and female nurses and nursing wards; workplace-based learning; the increasing control and tightening of disciplinary norms; the disappearance of medieval professions and occupations; the growing pre-

sence of nurses; the advancement of sciences in the 18th and 19th centuries and the dominance of medicine; and the particular case of midwives.

This research considers “three moments in the construction of historical discourse: first, the examination of the past through its traces; then the mental representation resulting from that examination; and finally, the production of a written or oral text” (Mattoso, 1997, p. 16). However, the methodological framework “is not solely of a scientific nature — that is, logical, rational, and discursive. It must also draw inspiration from processes of imagination and insight” (Mattoso, 1997, p. 25).

The identification of books and manuals can make essential contributions to understanding the slow structuring of the activity and the accumulation of knowledge, which at a certain point must be disciplined, literally becoming the discipline of nursing.

Without losing sight of the whole, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of each part. The analysis of books and manuals published at the beginning of the modern period helps to clarify the question posed by Amezcua (2019): “How did nurses come to construct their knowledge?” (p. 59). According to this author:

the knowledge contained in nursing ward manuals from the golden age is fundamentally experiential in nature and, therefore, seeks to collect the unwritten formulas used by nurses to deliver the best hospital care. In this sense, the manuals make explicit the tacit knowledge that was circulating within hospitals, offering practical solutions to patients’ needs. (Amezcua, 2019, p. 59)

The analysis of monastic rules and constitutions allows an understanding of the evolution of the organization and structuring of care practices carried out by those who, by caring for sick people, were already called nurses. These practices took place in spaces that gradually became adapted and separate, assuming the designation of nursing wards. This represents a long path of accumulating knowledge, transmitted orally within what Carneiro (2008) terms “corporate companionship.” Over time, this knowledge began to be structured, first appearing faintly in monastic rules and constitutions, and later giving rise to synthesized compilations in manuals.

Manuals from the 17th and 18th centuries benefit from a broad base of practical experience — an epistemology of practice, in which knowledge, due to its volume, need for precision, and requirement for reliable transmission beyond oral means, was progressively reduced to written syntheses. Thus, the transition from differentiation to normalization, and subsequently to professionalization, can be understood through Fassin’s (1996) operational concepts. This movement unfolds through diachronic sequences (i.e., over time), shaped by influences while simultaneously shaping surrounding contexts synchronically.

The period under study is characterized by a concentration of sources, specifically books published in Portuguese during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. During these centuries, the circulation of ideas, monastic orders, knowledge, books, and people was strongly facilitated by the Iberian

context. The Iberian Union (1580–1640), together with its antecedents and consequences, must therefore be taken into account. Understanding the history of nursing within the specific Portuguese context, particularly through the earliest written documents referring to male and female nurses, is essential for understanding the constraints and possibilities underlying the development of contemporary nursing practice and knowledge.

This study aimed to identify publications in Portuguese consisting of monastic rules and customaries, as well as manuals for nurses from the early modern period, and to describe and situate the material found within the broader movement of professionalization of Portuguese nursing.

Research question

What was the contribution of monastic rules and customaries, as well as nursing manuals, to the professionalization process of Portuguese nursing? What relevant insights for the History of Nursing can be gained from the study of these books?

Methodology

This study involved the identification of books published in Portugal in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries that are relevant to the history of Portuguese nursing, through research conducted in digital repositories and archives such as the National Library of Portugal, the Rare Books Library of the University of Coimbra, and the websites <http://books.google.com> and <https://archive.org>. These sources were subjected to critical analysis and contextualization. The historical interpretative construction was based on the assumption of the existence of a long process of differentiation, professionalization, and consolidation of knowledge in Portuguese nursing.

Results and Discussion

From the research conducted, five documents written in Portuguese and published in the 16th century were identified. These consist of monastic rules and constitutions containing references to the activities of male and female nurses (Table 1). In addition, three books published in the 17th and 18th centuries were identified as manuals or sets of instructions for nurses (Table 2).

Table 1

Some monastic rules and constitutions, published in Portuguese, with references to male and female nurses, 16th century.

Year	Title / Religious order
1544	<i>Livro das constituicoens e costumes que se guardam em os Mosteyros da Congregacam de Sancta Cruz de coimbra, dos Canónicos regulares da ordem do nosso Padre Sancto Agostinho</i> — Order of the Regular Canons of Saint Augustine. https://am.uc.pt/item/66631
1563	<i>Ordinário e Cerimonial da Ordem dos Cônegos regulares da ordem do bem-aventurado nosso Padre Sancto Augustinho, & da congregacam de Sancta Cruz de Coimbra</i> — Order of the Regular Canons of Saint Augustine. https://purl.pt/23038
1586	<i>Regra do Glorioso Patriarcha Sam Bento, Tirada do Latim em lingoãjê Portuguesa, por indústria do muito R. P. F. Placido Villalobos Geral nesta Congregação de Portugal</i> — Order of Saint Benedict. https://purl.pt/23116
1590	<i>Constituiçoens da Ordem de Sam Bento Destes Reynos de Portugal, Recopiladas e Tiradas de muitas definições, feitas & aprovadas nos capitulos géraes depois que se começou a reformação da ordem. Vão muitas cousas de novo declaradas, & acrescentadas por mando, & autoridade do Serenissimo Senhor Cardeal Alberto Archiduque de Austria, Legado de Lqtere nestes ditos Reynos</i> — Order of Saint Benedict. https://purl.pt/23116
1591	<i>Regra da bemaventurada Santa Clara, & Constituições fo mosteiro de Santa Maria de JESU, impressas por ordem & mandado da Madre Soror Maria da Encarnação, uma das fundadoras, e& segunda Abbadessa da dita casa</i> — Order of Friars Minor of the Third Order. Urbanist Poor Clares. https://purl.pt/15143

Source: Authors.

These books provide valuable information for understanding caregiving activities within a process of differentiation, carried out by those who cared for and/ or were responsible for patients and dedicated spaces such as nursing wards. They are printed texts that compile earlier manuscripts, whose circulation was not restricted to the national context. Some of these printed writings, in Portuguese, result from Latin or Hispanic translations as well as other sources. They inform us not only about the realities at the time of their publication, but also about earlier lines of continuity.

The five 16th-century documents constitute a sample, certainly among others. The analysis of each is of interest for elucidating the development of the activities of monks and nuns acting as nurses within monastic and conventual institutions. These books form part of the national publishing movement, with 132 works published between 1566 and 1570 and 114 between 1571 and 1575 (Macedo, 1979, p. 50). The *Pentateuco* was the first Portuguese book printed in Faro, in 1487, in Hebrew. A second book, *O Tratado de Confissom*, was printed in Chaves in 1489 in Portuguese (Coelho, 2024).

The volume *Livro das Constituições e Costumes do Mosteiro de Santa Cruz de Coimbra*, dated 1544, from the Order of the Regular Canons of Saint Augustine, has also survived. From the same congregation and monastery, the *Ordinário e Cerimonial*, published in 1563, is also known. Within the Order of Saint Benedict, two further books were identified, one published in 1586 and another in 1590. The former presents the Rule of the glorious Patriarch Saint Benedict, while the latter establishes the constitutions of the Order for the Kingdom of Portugal. A fifth document consists of the constitutions of the Order of the Poor Clare nuns from the Monastery of Santa Maria de Jesus, dated 1591, representing a female monastic context.

The *Livro das constituicoens e costumes que se guardam em os Mosteyros da Congregacam de Sancta Cruz de Coimbra...* of 1544 states that the office of nurse should be entrusted to a charitable, patient, and diligent brother, who should be attentive to patients in three matters:

First, the sacraments shall be ministered unto them at the beginning of their illness, and the confession, communion, and unction in due time. Second, they shall be kept with great cleanliness, with medicines and with all else that may be required, according to the ordinance of the physician. Third, they shall be wisely comforted and encouraged with good words and examples, so that they may be patient in their infirmities..." (Chapter XIV, unpaginated)

It further states that "to these tasks... the necessary brethren shall be assigned, for no lay servants shall enter the nursing ward" (Chapter XIV, unpaginated).

The *Ordinário e Cerimonial* of the Augustinians, dated 1563, reports that whenever communion is to be taken to a patient,

the nurse shall (clean the room in which the patient lies) make the bed with clean linen, clothe him with a clean shirt and cap, place a clean sheet upon the bed, and set up a table in the same room in the manner of an altar, with a cloth, altar stone, images, and chalices with lamps; beside it, a brazier with glowing coals and certain fragrances (Chapter XXXVIII, fol. LXXXI).

In 1586, the book *Regra do Glorioso Patriarcha Sam Bento, Tirada do Latim em lingoàjé Portuguesa, por indústria do muito R. P. F. Placido Villalobos Geral nesta Congregação de Portugal* was published, by order of the General of the Benedictine Order and printed in Lisbon by António Ribeiro.

In this book, in the chapter "Dos irmãos enfermos" ("On sick brethren"), the entire monastic program of care for patients is presented. It is established that "above all things and before all else, care must be taken of patients, and they must be treated with particular attention" (verso of fol. 27). It further determines that "the abbot shall take great care that there be no negligence in the curing of patients, for whom there shall be a separate and appointed lodging, and that they shall have a God-fearing, diligent, and attentive nurse to serve them" (verso of fol. 27).

It is added that no patient is to be treated in the dormi-

tory, so as not to disturb the convent. It is clarified that patients should consider that those who serve them do so for God, and that suffering should be borne with patience, for thereby "a greater reward is attained" (verso of fol. 27). It is also determined that the nurse should bathe the patient whenever necessary, and that the consumption of meat be permitted both to patients and to the very weak, so that they may recover their strength.

In summary, this work identifies nurses and normative regulations, patients, and nursing wards.

Another Benedictine book from 1590 is more extensive. In Chapter 42, entitled "Da cura dos enfermos e qualidade dos enfermeiros" ("On the care of patients and the qualities of nurses") (verso of fol. 132), the idea that prelates should take care of the treatment of patients is repeated and reinforced. It is determined that, for the office of nurse, the prelate "shall choose a religious who is charitable, diligent, patient, humble, and compassionate" (fol. 133). The relationship with the physician is regulated, and an account is given of what is to be found within the nursing ward space.

In each house we command, under obedience, that there be some manner of apothecary, distilling waters in due time and keeping oils, cassia fistula, and certain syrups that an apothecary may prepare; houses that lie outside populated areas, where there is no physician or apothecary, need to be provided with such things. Let there be no lack of sugar, almonds, raisins, and all that is necessary for restoratives; and let all houses have a salaried physician. Let there be bedding, head cloths, shirts, sheets, pillows, towels, and sleeping scapulars without a hood for patients, for all these things are necessary. Let glassware and earthenware be purchased to serve the nursing ward alone. This is commanded to the prelates under penalty of suspension from their office for three months. (fol. 133).

It is further determined, in the chapter "Do officio do celareiro, recebedor, & gastador do convento" ("On the office of the cellarer, receiver, and steward of the convent"), that:

The steward shall be very diligent in purchasing in due time the things that are necessary for patients, for in such matters no delay is to be tolerated; and because such things are costly, he shall not refrain from purchasing them, for our Father Saint Benedict bears such great concern for the care of patients that he says that, above all things, the prelate and the cellarer must take care that patients suffer no want (p. 159).

The book of the constitutions of the Order of the Poor Clare nuns, from the female Monastery of Santa Maria de Jesus, dated 1591, is a compilation commissioned by the second Abbess, Maria da Encarnação, of two documents: the Rule of Saint Clare attributed to the monastery in the year 1590 and the constitutions and rules drawn up by Mother Sister Maria do Presépio, founder and first Abbess, in 1583.

In this book, extensive references are found to the framework and functions of the nurse, as well as consi-

derations on the “preservation of strength and bodily health” (p. 61) and on the “care of bodily health” (p. 179). Namely: “Because bodily exercise greatly aids health, all shall engage in some, by sweeping, washing, or performing other household tasks suitable for this purpose, at the times and for the duration ordered by the Abbess” (p. 63); and further: “because health, and the proper use thereof, is necessary for the service of God and an aid to spiritual benefit” (p. 179). The Abbess is entrusted not only with the care of souls but also of bodies and therefore must provide each with what is necessary for sustenance (p. 179).

In the paragraph entitled “Das freiras enfermas” (“On sick nuns”), it is stipulated that “concerning sick nuns, every possible care shall be taken ... and that those who are ill shall, if it can be done, have a place of their own, where they may remain separated from the healthy” (p. 6). As for the “Regras da Enfermeira” (“Rules of the nurse”) (pp. 223–225), it is stated that she shall take care of patients and of their illnesses, and that as soon as she becomes aware of them, she shall inform the prioress. The prioress shall ascertain from the Abbess whether the physician is to be summoned immediately, and every time the physician visits female patients, the nurse shall be present. She shall take care to know what is to be given to each patient. The nurse should also ensure that the beds and places in which patients reside are kept very clean, that the beds are well made and arranged, and that, when necessary, there are perfumes, scented waters, branches, and flowers, and all else that may serve to relieve and comfort patients. She shall seek to console and cheer patients, gladdening them not only with those things approved by the physician, but also with spiritual and cheerful words. She shall keep

in her charge the medicines and all things necessary or useful for patients, which are to be stored in the house apothecary. She shall remember to store them in a suitable place and inspect them frequently to ensure that they are preserved and do not spoil. She shall omit nothing that the physician orders, nor alter it in any way. She shall also observe the appointed times at which meals, suppers, syrups, and other medicines are to be given, taking in writing all that the physician prescribes. The nurse should take note of the day on which the patient first fell ill, and of the hour at which the fever began and subsided, to report it to the prioress and to the physician. If the illness is contagious, she shall set apart the clothing and all other items used by the patient, so that they do not harm the healthy ones. She shall not allow recovering patients to rise before the physician permits it. Both the nurse and those who assist her with patience shall endure the ailments and difficulties that occur and commonly arise in the care and treatment of patients. Care shall be taken that excessive vigils, immoderate labors, or contagion of the illness do not harm her own health or that of her companions. When the gravity of the illness so requires, she shall inform the prioress so that the patient, before losing her reason, may receive all the Sacraments. If the patient, though not in danger, persists for a long time in her illness, she shall endeavor to ensure that she receives the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. She shall also ensure that the bodies of those who pass from this life to the eternal are prepared for burial.

Following the 16th-century publications, three additional works from the 17th and 18th centuries are identified, presenting themselves as manuals or instructional texts for nurses (Table 2).

Table 2

Manuals published in Portuguese, with references to male and female nurses, 17th and 18th centuries

Year	Title / Religious order
1664	<i>Luz da Medicina, Prática Racional, Methodica, guia de enfermeyros, directorio de principiantes e summmario de remedios para poder acodir...</i> Francisco Morato Roma. https://books.google.pt/books?id=CKHrSWAWpScC&printsec=frontcover&hl=pt-PT&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false
1741	<i>Postilla Religiosa, e Arte de Enfermeiros.</i> Friar Diogo de Santiago. Hospitaller friars. https://dn790007.ca.archive.org/0/items/b30507340/b30507340.pdf
1747	<i>Instrução de enfermeiros, e consolaçam para os afligidos enfermos: e verdadeira pratica de como se devem aplicar os remedios, que os Medicos ordenaõ, muito necessária para que os enfermos sejam bem curados e proveitosa aos praticantes de Medicina.</i> Andrés Fernández y Hermanos de la Congregación de Bernardino de Obregón. http://purl.pt/29458

Source: Authors

First published in 1664, *Luz da Medicina* was reissued in 1672, 1686, 1700, and 1735. On its title page, a description is provided of its content and of the purpose for which it was intended:

Luz da Medicina, Rational and Methodical Practice, Guide for Nurses. A Directory for Beginners and a Summary of Remedies, to enable one to attend to and remedy the ailments of the human body, beginning from the highest part of the head

and descending to the lowest part of the soles of the feet; a work most useful and necessary not only for practitioners of the art of medicine and surgery, but also for every head of household; from which both poor and rich may benefit in the absence of learned physicians. (Roma, 1664, p. 1)

This book is organized into two parts: a first part comprising six books, and a second part, *Prática Racional* (Rational Practice), with treatises relating to the upper,

middle, and lower regions of the body. In addition, it includes a treatise devoted to women's diseases and another addressing simple, putrid, pestilential, and malignant fevers (Subtil & Vieira, 2015).

In an in-depth study of this work, Subtil and Vieira (2015) present the author, Francisco Morato Roma, based on the information contained on the book's title page. He served as physician to the Royal Councils of Kings João IV and Afonso VI, was a physician of the Inquisition, and a professed member of the Order of Christ. He was born in Castelo de Vide in 1588 and died in 1668. He studied philosophy at the University of Évora and later obtained his degree in medicine at the University of Coimbra.

According to Borges (2017), *Luz da Medicina* was among the works that influenced Friar Diogo de Santiago between 1738 and 1740 in the writing of *Postilla Religiosa e Arte de Enfermeiros*, published in 1741.

Several studies have been published on the *Postilla*, including those by Amezcua (2017, 2019), Borges (2017), Ferraz et al. (2015), Ferraz (2019), Gameiro (2005), Rodrigues (2007), Mouga Poças and Gómez-Cantarino (2024), and Subtil and Vieira (2015). In general terms, the author is known to have been a religious of the Order of Saint John of God, who organized this book in the form of a *sebenta* (postilla) for the education of novices under his responsibility at the Convent of Elvas, where he served as Master of Novices. It is the first book written in Portuguese by a nurse. The work is divided into three treatises: the first is directed toward religious formation; the second, whose first chapter emphasizes "Advice for nurses," is followed by 59 chapters guiding the application of medicines (Ferraz et al., 2015); the third, comprising seven chapters, concerns religious assistance to patients and those dying.

In an Iberian context, this work was not among the earliest, as the training of religious personnel for the provision of nursing care predates it. Other works are known, such as *Instrucción de enfermos* by Andrés Fernández, published in Madrid in 1617 (Rodrigues, 2007, pp. 101–102).

The book *Instrução de enfermeiros, e consolaçam para os afligidos enfermos...*, published in Portuguese in Lisbon in 1747 at the printing house of Francisco da Silva, is a translation of the work by Andrés Fernández originally published in Madrid in 1617. Amezcua identifies seven editions in Spanish, the first dating from 1617 and the last from 1728. What do these nursing manuals address? Studies by García-Martínez et al. (1992) indicate that they encompass seven thematic categories: therapeutic techniques and procedures; nursing care in specific illnesses and emergencies; preparation, indication, and administration of pharmaceuticals; concepts of anatomy; dietary advice and guidance; prioritization of treatments prescribed by the physician; and knowledge of therapeutics. Amezcua adds an additional category: procedures for the spiritual comfort of patients (Amezcua, 2019).

In *Instrução de Enfermeiros...*, reference is made to Father Bernardino Obregón, emphasizing that it was he who requested that the book be written so that physicians might recognize the good being done for patients. This work comprises two parts: the "Treatise on Prayers" and

the "Method of Applying Remedies by Nurses according to the Physicians' Orders." Bernardino de Obregón came to Lisbon in 1592 at the invitation of Prince Albert to work at the Hospital of All Saints. Earlier, in 1589, with the support of Philip II of Spain during the Iberian Union (1580–1640), he founded the Congregation of the Minims of the Servants of the Poor, known as the "Obregón Brothers." It was likely at the Monastery of Nossa Senhora da Luz and at the Royal Hospital of Évora that he drafted the religious constitution of the brotherhood, as well as rules and practical norms of care.

Andrés Fernández was a nurse and friar of the Congregation of the Obregóns and died in 1599. He served twice as senior brother of the congregation and worked in hospitals in Portugal and in Villaviciosa, in the Principality of Asturias.

In *Instrução...*, the value of experience is emphasized. As noted by Amezcua, "the censor of the 1680 edition... highlights the value of experience, due to its potential to ground widely tested knowledge in an intense professional practice" (Amezcua, 2019, p. 62). Andrés Fernández

was an experienced individual and therefore enjoyed social recognition. He necessarily had to be an educated person with considerable intellectual capacity, given the need to synthesize and structure knowledge that had previously been transmitted orally among nurses (Amezcua, 2019, pp. 63–64).

Thus, a corpus of books can be identified, ranging from the rules and constitutions of monastic orders to instructions and manuals for male and female nurses. Over the course of these three centuries, this corpus reveals an increase in descriptive detail, an expansion in the synthesis of accumulated knowledge, and a growing reliance on writing as a means of transmission and training for those entering the activity. These elements, alongside others from different dimensions, mark the process of differentiation of nursing activities and create the conditions for subsequent professionalization. Accordingly, books from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries reveal both the presence and activity of nurses and the progressive systematization and disciplining of nursing knowledge in written form.

Conclusion

The monastic rules and constitutions of the 16th century are documents of great value for understanding how nursing activity first emerged and initially developed within monastic contexts, without excluding other parallel lines of development. They provide insight into the early processes of implementation of this activity and its differentiation.

The instruction manuals of the 17th and 18th centuries represent compilations of knowledge of greater structure and depth. Published in Portuguese, they include original texts, copies, and translations, with clear interdependencies that are far removed from the contemporary concept of plagiarism. The training of nurses was carried out through integration and the acquisition of knowledge in practical action, by observing, imitating, practicing,

and learning from more experienced companions within a form of “corporate companionship,” alongside a more directed form of training that benefited from the systematization provided by manuals and instructions. The rules and constitutions of the 16th century, together with the manuals of the 17th and 18th centuries, constitute integral components of the long process of professional differentiation and the structuring of nursing knowledge.

Author contributions

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