

The history of nursing in Cameroon

Nursing in Cameroon has a rich and evolving history that reflects the development of healthcare and nursing education in the country from apprenticeship period to the formal education period. From its early beginnings, nursing has grown to become an integral part of the healthcare system, playing a crucial role in providing quality patient care and promoting public health. Here is an overview of the history of nursing in Cameroon, highlighting key milestones and significant developments.

In 1891, the Catholic missionaries arrived in Cameroon

led by the Mill Hill Missionaries from England, arrived in Cameroon to establish mission stations and provide medical care to the local population. These missionaries trained and employed local individuals known as "dressers" to assist them in providing healthcare services. These "dressers" were trained through apprenticeship.

The "dressers" continued to play a vital role in healthcare delivery, working alongside German medical personnel during the German colonial rule in 1914.

During World War I in 1916, French and British forces occupied Cameroon and began establishing health care systems while integrating the dressers in their medical services and the first modern hospital, known as the "Hopital Djoungolo," was opened in Douala by the French administration in 1922.

By the year 1932, the French administration established the first nursing schools in Cameroon thereby changing the nursing training from apprenticeship to providing formal education and training for aspiring nurses. The nursing school aimed to develop local nursing talent and reduce reliance on foreign personnel. Also, the French administration introduced midwifery training programs to address the growing need for skilled maternal and child healthcare in 1957 and these programs enabled Cameroonian women to receive specialized education and become midwives.

When Cameroon gained its independence from colonial rule in 1960, and the government recognized the importance of nursing in healthcare delivery therefore nursing schools and programs were expanded throughout the country, offering more opportunities for aspiring nurses to be trained.

In the 1970s the government of Cameroon, in collaboration with international partners and organizations, expanded the availability of higher education programs in nursing thereby leading to the establishment of several nursing colleges and universities offering bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing. Professional nursing associations, such as the National Association of Nurses of Cameroon (NANC), were established to promote the interests and welfare of nurses in the 1990s. The government implemented regulations and licensing requirements to ensure the quality and competence of nursing professionals. Nursing continues to evolve and play an essential role in healthcare delivery in Cameroon till date.

Therefore from the time of colonial masters to present day, nursing in Cameroon has evolved and is still evolving for better healthcare in the country.