

Before the advent of “modern” nursing during the colonial era, the care of patients in different tribes and villages were in the hands of medicine men and women. This people who still exist are believed to possess spiritual powers and deep knowledge of herbs and other rituals and their role in diagnosing and treating both physical and spiritual ailments. This “traditional medicine” is believed to have components that could be taught through apprenticeship and others that could only be transferred to successors spiritually following instructions from the ancestors. Problems of fertility and pregnancy were managed by the traditional doctors, while issues of delivery and postpartum care were handled by traditional birth attendants who were usually elderly women. The traditional birth attendants received no formal training and may have learned by apprenticeship. They provided care for the mother and neonate advised on nutrition, hygiene and also carried out circumcision. These women were also known to treat common childhood diseases and even complex conditions like umbilical hernia, through traditional method. The responsibility of caring for sick person’s was usually in the hands of their relatives who were usually guided by the native doctor. This family involvement in care has continued today with hospitals always crowded by patient relatives actively taking over some nursing roles in the care of the patient

A Nursing Training School was created in Ayoa in 1933 by the French colonial masters. This School contributed immensely to the training of indigenous physicians. In 1939, French Cameroon had 150 medical Centers and 50 Doctors.