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EVOLUTION OF NURSING IN
CAMEROON

Before the introduction of nursing in Cameroon, traditional medicine was the main form of health care available and those who fell ill tried to heal themselves with various concoctions as disease at that time was perceived to have a spiritual background. With the colonisation of Cameroon by the German, these practices began being scraped off as they introduced their integrated health structures. They train people they called the *dressers* whose main duties were to help the surgeons. This however did not last for long as Cameroon was taken over by the British and the French.

Nursing in Cameroon is often described as having multiple births. In the French part of Cameroon, Dr Eugene Jamot began a nursing program in 1930 which trained people for 3 months and the graduates from these institution fought against sleeping sickness. Later a 3 year program was introduced to train health technicians who had both medical and surgical roles. The first nursing school in Cameroon was then created in 1933 in Ayos by the French colonial masters. In 1959 a formal curriculum was introduced following the French model

In the English part of the country, the British continued using the services of the *dressers* when they opened the African hospital in Victoria. The nurses were train in Nigeria and it was easy to move to Nigeria and study since it was all British colonies. The first nursing school in this part of the country was created by the catholic missionaries in Shisong in 1954 and it was a 3 year program.

When Cameroon finally got its independence, the government organised nursing education under the control of physicians with the main purpose was to frame State registered nurses (SRN) who were generally qualified and capable of fulfilling various responsibilities. This was done by the ministry of public health and directors of these schools were either holders of a degree in medicine or an advanced

diploma in nursing. With the first being the *Training school for state registered nurses in Bamenda* in 1969. Since these nurses were trained for immediate consumption there still experienced a shortage as such physicians started training their own nurses making the whole process ineffective.

In the 1990s and 2000s many nursing programs were taken over by the ministry of higher education with the launching of the HND program. This was meant to give nurses the possibility of having bachelors or even masters in nursing. This created a very TURF war as many government ministries got involved in training nurses and this went as far as influencing even the recruitment process of nurses in various establishments. The first bachelor of nursing program was introduced by Mc Holi who came in from Nigeria and introduced the faculty of health science. Expanding the studies of nursing not limited only to bedside nursing but also managerial responsibilities however this was criticised for being too theoretical.

The University of Buea then started the bachelor of nursing program (4years) and its first batch graduated in 2001. They later graduated their first batch of master's nurses in 2009. University of Yaoundé also graduated their first batch of master's nurses in the late 2000s. So many theories or stories exist about the evolution of nursing in Cameroon but on fact remains that it has been a very slow process.