

## NURSES OF BRAZIL: THE HISTORY OF THE PIONEERS

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**T**he chapters of the book *Enfermeiras do Brasil: história das pioneiras*. [Nurses of Brazil: the history of the pioneers] written by Vitória Secaf e Hebe Canuto da Boa-Viagem de Andrade Costa published in 2007 by Martinari in São Paulo, address, at first, the life story of 15 Brazilian nursing pioneers.

The clear and informative text is quite exciting. It is a history book about the lives of these women, and it brings about a desire to learn details about each character, their connections, influences, and production.

The book is committed to history and with the humanization of care, since the descriptions report there is much suffering among people, and the text implies there is a belief in people's capability of learning.

The book is divided into 15 chapters, which present the pioneers, and has an introduction contextualizing nursing and the sanitary situation in the country. The book's ending emphasizes on the incontestable value of these 15 WOMEN. The text presents their contributions in creating schools, organizing services, creating the *Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem* (Brazilian Nursing Association), the *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem* (Brazilian Nursing Magazine) and the legal bases of the profession: the *Conselho de Enfermagem* (Nursing Council).

The 184 pages in which the authors gathered the 15 Brazilian nursing pioneers can be enjoyed as histories of these nurses' lives, or as a history of nursing.

Some points from the historical context merit special attention: in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Brazil had around 30 thousand inhabitants, and of those over 15 years of age only 20% could read. Similar to the educational system, public health services, including in the capital at the time - *Rio de Janeiro*, were precarious. The Sisters of charity looked after the

hospitalized patients, a situation that worsened in the post-war period. The first measures taken to prepare people for providing care date back to 1890. However, the Nursing Service of the National Public Health Department was established only in the 1920s, when Dr. Carlos Chagas - began preparing nurses with international help.

The group headed by Ethel O. Parsons with other 13 American nurses for a technical mission of the Rockefeller Foundation organized public health and created a quick course of visitors in order to answer the need of improving health service standards, and the 1<sup>st</sup> important name appears among the pioneers "Edith Magalhães Fraenkel".

It was a political postulation that the first Nursing School had the highest teaching standards. The Nursing School of the National Public Health Department was established in February 1923, with a 2.5 year course . It was only in 1931 that it became the "Ana Néri" Nursing School. In 1937 it was incorporated to the *Universidade do Brasil* (University of Brazil), and in 1946 it was accredited as a superior education institution.

In the 1940s, the government of the State of *São Paulo* strived to create a Nursing School that eventually became the *Escola de Enfermagem da Universidade de São Paulo* (Univeristy of São Paulo School of Nursing). Edith Magalhães Fraenkel played a main role in reaching this achievement. Soon, this school revealed its excellent teaching standards, comparable to the American schools of the time.

Since the beginning of the American mission, the nurses that stood out were sent to countries like Canada and the USA to graduate or specialize.

The nurse Ethel O. Parsons encouraged the creation of an Association of Certificated Nurses, today called ABEn - the Brazilian Nursing Association [*Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem*]. ABEn was

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established and working as early as 1929, and, in this same year, it represented Brazil at the International Nursing Council (ICN) Congress in Canada.

Another important result of this mission was the creation of a journal in 1932. Today, the Brazilian Journal of Nursing has the status of an international journal due to the quality of its articles, its modern database system, and distribution.

In the 1930s and 40s, other schools were created throughout Brazil, such as the *Escola de Enfermagem Raquel Haddock Lobo (UERJ)* in 1948. In 1930, the *Escola de Enfermagem Carlos Chagas em Belo Horizonte* was created. In 1938, the *Escola de Enfermagem da Escola Paulista de Medicina - EPM* was founded. In 1947, the *Escola de Enfermagem em Salvador (Bahia)* was created and the *Escola de Enfermagem do Rio Grande do Sul* was established in 1951. In 1952, the *Escola de Enfermagem de Ribeirão Preto/USP* was created under the direction of Glete de Alcântara. These pioneers founded schools and organized services such as the Sao Paulo Hospital Nursing Service [*Serviço de Enfermagem do Hospital São Paulo*] (SESP) in Rio de Janeiro, 1935, the Sao Paulo Maternal Shelter [*Amparo Maternal de São Paulo*], in 1939 and other important health services in many places in Brazil, especially state capitals.

There are also many common facts among these 15 pioneers: almost all of them had the opportunity of completing their undergraduate or specialization studies overseas; they all had trust positions; they owing to their competence in their performance or to representing, at that moment, the ideal nurse or the ideal professional to answer the country's and health system's needs. They all met and helped each through the gathering character of Edith Magalhães Fraenkel, or through the strength of the *Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem* and the *Revista Brasileira* (the only printed means of communication of the profession for many years), or, yet, for their connection with teaching aiming to form high quality nurses. Most of them received important tributes in life and after passing away.

The 15 Brazilian nurses are presented according to the date they started working in nursing, with emphasis on the particularities that make the book a piece on the construction of nursing in Brazil:

Edith Magalhães Fraenkel (1889-1968); Rachel Haddock Lobo (1891-1933); Lais M. Netto dos Reys (1894-1950); Izaura Barbosa Lima (1897- ); HildaAnna Krisch (1900-1995); Zaira Cintra Vidal (1903-1997); Madre Domineuc (1911-1998); Haydee Guanais Dourado (1915-2004); Waleska Paixão (1903-1993); Maria Rosa de Souza Piheiro (1908-2002); Glete de Alcântara (1910-1974); Marina Andrade Resende (1918-1975); Olga Verderese (1917-2004); Wanda Horta (1928-1981), and Maria Ivete Ribeiro de Oliveira (1928-2003).

Finally, it is worth emphasizing the careful presentation of the book "*Enfermagem do Brasil - história das pioneiras*": each nurse had their picture artistically drawn in the beginning of the respective chapter and, on the cover, the map of our country gathers the 15 pioneers.

Victória and Hebe did a wonderful job on the composition of this untold and valuable work for the historical collection of the profession that today is compared to the international nursing in care, teaching, and research.