

Letter to the Editor

Increasing Importance of Florence Nightingale's Theory During the 21st-Century Pandemic Period

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Cite this article as: Kolagari, S. (2023). Increasing importance of Florence Nightingale's theory during the 21st-century pandemic period. *Florence Nightingale Journal of Nursing*, 31(3), 215-216.

To the Editor

In late 2019, history turned another page in the invasion of infectious agents, a virus from the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) family spread worldwide. This virus, called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), emerged as a new pathogen causing acute respiratory syndrome. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) a pandemic. The coronavirus disease 2019, which was first reported on December 31, 2019, in Wuhan, China, was initially introduced as pneumonia with an unknown source (Mudenda, 2020). However, with further research, and the appearance of clinical signs and symptoms such as fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, sputum, sore throat, chest pain, muscle pain, gastrointestinal problems, respiratory failure, failure of other organs, septic shock, and impaired consciousness, it was called a newly emerging viral disease. As the world was confronted with the coronavirus explosion, health-care providers increasingly focused on preventing the spread of the virus. The first step was to follow the hygiene protocols such as washing and disinfecting hands with water, soap, and alcohol and wearing a mask (Martini & Lippi, 2021). These measures remind the Florence Nightingale's theory (1820-1910) about the role of environmental factors and preventive measures in preventing the spread of infection. It emphasizes her deep concern for society and personal health applications about a century and a half ago (Hillier, 2020).

This letter to editor aimed at implying the importance of Florence Nightingale's theory and its influence on infection prevention and control in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Florence Nightingale is a familiar theorist in nursing, who lived several years ago. Her thoughts and ideas of vision about environmental challenges, the role of environmental health in preventing the spread of diseases, and recovery of patients led to dramatic changes in treatment and care process in the second half of the 19th century. During the Crimean War (1853), she proposed hygiene instructions, sanitation, ventilation, a clean environment, and hand-washing in order to care for the war-wounded with the support of the British Government and Army. As a

result, her hand-washing practice reduced the mortality rate of the wounded from 42% to 2%. Florence Nightingale's epidemiology-driven care strategy is based on washing hands with soap and water, keeping the environment clean, avoiding respiratory secretions, preventing the spread of cough and sneeze droplets, being in the fresh air, keeping surfaces and objects clean, and generally preventing the transmission of infectious diseases. In her view, the hands of health-care providers are the most common way of transmitting pathogens from person to person. Transmission occurs when nasal mucosa, eyes, and mouth are exposed to infectious agents in contaminated hands (Martini & Lippi, 2021).

She wrote, "Nurses should pay special attention to washing and disinfecting their hands, especially in an epidemic. Moreover, they'd better wash or cover their mouth and nose" in her book about nursing. She believed that people should wash their hands and keep their houses clean when an infectious agent spread in the environment and society. Besides, she considered nurses the most influential people to maintain the health of the environment and society (Davies, 2012). Although the 1980s was a turning point in the evolution of hygiene and hand-washing concepts during care (Martini & Lippi, 2021), in the historical process of combating infectious diseases, continuous observance of hygiene protocols such as washing hands and cleaning the environment are necessary for breaking the chain of infection (Mitchell et al., 2017). In fact, during a global epidemic, washing hands, cleaning the environment, disinfecting objects with water and soap, disinfecting materials, and cleaning surfaces and objects are the cheapest, easiest, and most effective ways of preventing the virus spread. Nightingale proposed this strategy more than a century and a half ago (Hillier, 2020). In other words, she strived to prevent infectious diseases by creating a healing environment by nurses (Emami Zeydi et al., 2021).

Hence, inspired by Florence Nightingale's preventive strategies based on hand and environmental hygiene, disinfection instructions, covering mouth and nose, and social distancing, humans have been able to fight against COVID-19 for the health of individuals and society in the 21st century.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Declaration of Interests: The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

Funding: The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

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