Florence Nightingale Articles

  Nurses are actively finding Florence Nightingale to be relevant to nursing knowledge, nursing organization, and nursing education. A study of her life is also seen to be relevant and there is a need to look at Nightingale’s writings for a deeper understanding of her relevance.

  “As awareness of the spirit and the spiritual continues to reawaken within our contemporary health care settings, I find hope and challenge for nursing in an appreciation that our founder was both a mystic and an empiricist who recognized the interconnected web of all life. In her grappling with the profound questions of human existence, Nightingale was able to see that science and spirituality are inextricably connected and to appreciate that healing requires attentiveness to body, mind, spirit, and environment. She also recognized the primacy of love in healing and that services to humanity is service to the source of life, whether this source be called God, Goddess, the Absolute, or the Higher Good. Our contemporary health care system needs the renewal of this vision that is promoted through holistic nursing practice. As holistic nurses, we must address the challenge of returning to our roots, both individually and collectively.”

  This article analyzes the components of Florence Nightingale’s visionary leadership for global health and nursing within the historical context of Great Britain’s colonization of India. The descriptive study used the qualitative approach of narrative analysis to analyze selected letters in the Nightingale Letter Collection at the University of Alabama at Birmingham that Nightingale wrote to or about Dr. Thomas Gillham Hewlett, a physician and health officer in Bombay, India. The authors sought to increase understanding of Nightingale’s visionary leadership for global nursing and health through a study of the form and content of the letters analyzed as temporally contextualized data, focusing on how the narratives are composed and what is conveyed. Several recurring themes central to Nightingale’s leadership on global nursing and health emerge throughout these letters, including health and sanitation reform, collaborative partnerships, data-driven policy development, and advocacy for public health. These themes are illustrated through her letters to and testimony about Dr. Thomas Gillham Hewlett in her vivid descriptions of health education and promotion, data-driven policy documents, public health and sanitation advice, and collaboration with citizens, medicine, policy makers, and governments to improve the health and welfare of the people of India. The focus on leadership in nursing as a global construct highlights the lessons learned from University of Alabama at Birmingham’s Nightingale Letter Collection that has relevance for the future of nursing and health care, particularly Nightingale’s collaboration with policy leaders, her analysis of data to set policy agendas, and public health reform centered on improving the health and well-being of underserved populations. Read the full article [here](#).
Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) received a clear and profoundly moving Call to serve God at the age of 16. Through a lifetime of hard work and discipline, she became a practicing mystic in the Western tradition, thereby becoming an instrument of God’s love, which was the primarily source of her great energy and the fabled “Nightingale power.” To understand the life and work of this legendary healer, who forever changed human consciousness, the role of women, and nursing and public health systems in the middle of the 19th century, it is necessary to understand her motivation and inspiration. This article will discuss her life and work in the context of her mystical practice and to show the parallels between her life and the lives of three recognized women mystics. In her epic Crimean war mission (1854-1856) of leading and directing women nurses in the army hospital at Scutari, Turkey, Florence Nightingale burst into world consciousness as a spiritual beacon of hope and compassion for all who suffered. Her historic breakthrough achievement—pioneering the modern administrative role of nurse superintendent with measurable outcomes supported by irrefutable data—in the face of incredible adversity was merely the cornerstone of her life work.

Florence Nightingale’s Crimean fever and chronic illness have intrigued historians for more than a century and a half. The purpose of this article is threefold: (a) to discuss the facts that point to the cause of Nightingale’s Crimean fever as brucellosis, (b) to show that her debilitating illness for 32 years (1855-1887) was compatible with the specific form of chronic brucellosis, and (c) to present new evidence that she was still having severe symptoms in December 1887, when it was previously felt that she had no severe symptoms after 1870.

This article casts new and refreshing light on Florence Nightingale’s life and work by examining her personality type. Using the theory-based Myers—Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the author examines Nightingale’s personality type and reveals that she was an introverted-intuitive-thinking-judging type. The merit of using the MBTI is that it allows us to more clearly understand three major areas of Nightingale’s life that have been partially unacknowledged or misunderstood: her spiritual development as a practicing mystic, her management of her chronic illness to maintain her prodigious work output, and her chosen strategies to transform her visionary ideas into new health care and social realities.

“Several months ago, I had a visit from Barbara Dossey, who shared with me the findings from her extensive travels and research into the life of Florence Nightingale. During that visit, Barbara also played for me a recording she had obtained of Nightingale’s voice. Shortly after her visit, I had a dream about Dossey and Nightingale. In my dream, I called Barbara to discuss a project. Her answering machine picked up the call with the familiar message usually heard when she is away from home: “If you have a message for Barbara, please leave it at the sound of the tone.” However, I was shocked to discover the voice on the machine was not Barbara’s but rather was that of Nightingale! I immediately reacted by think how clever Barbara was to dub Nightingale’s voice on her machine. But within the same instant, it occurred to me that perhaps Florence Nightingale now resided in the Dossey home.”
As the health care field moves into the 21st century, the discipline is moving into new forms of service and leadership. This article presents a view of Nightingale as a transformational leader from the vantage point of personality and from inspired commitment to social action. Values, beliefs, and the changing roles of nursing leadership in creation of new order are examined along with skills and capacities necessary to accomplish the task at hand.

“Florence Nightingale: The Evolution and Social Impact of Feminist Values in Nursing” provides an important perspective for understanding Florence Nightingale within the cultural context of 19th-century Victorian England. Insights into her decisions, actions, and accomplishments, based on her unwillingness to compromise her core beliefs and values, inspired me to reflect on the spirit and vision that were to change the direction of health care. Although Nightingale was methodical, a statistician, and highly organized in her planning for social and health care reform, she also relied on her inner truth, intuition, and inner knowing for direction and for maintaining balance and perspective in her process in the outer world. She questioned and reflected on the nature of the female spirit and expressed in her writings her yearning for a world free from indifference; instead, she envisioned a world filled with compassion and caring for the whole person. Her nursing paradigm reflected these values, which were central to her work in health care reform in the emerging medical field.

Nightingale’s passionate commitment to statistics was based on her faith in a god of order, who created a world that ran by law. God’s laws could be known through research, as a result of which suitable interventions to better the world could be applied. Statistics were a vital component in her holistic approach to health care as a system. They served both to indicate serious problems and to assist in policy making, and then again to monitor the effects of the new policies. She pioneered the use of evaluative statistics and saw reforms achieved as a result of her advocacy. This article explores three key aspects selected from Nightingale’s more than 40 years of applied statistical work: her adaptation of Quetelet’s methodological foundations, the use of statistics in monitoring public health care systems, and her pioneering study of maternal mortality in childbirth.

“Lynn McDonald’s article on Florence Nightingale as a passionate statistician identifies numerous ways in which Nightingale used data to support her arguments for social reform in the late 1860s. Clearly, Nightingale understood that statistics could be both used and abused in the support of various political positions. This article reflects on the historical evidence provided by McDonald of Nightingale’s contributions not only to health care reforms in the late 19th century but also of the current role of professional nursing in emerging health care systems.”

Read the full article here.

Although generally recognized as the founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale has been criticized for her apparent lack of support of women’s issues, including suffrage. This article examines the primary and supporting literature surrounding this topic. Findings indicate that Nightingale developed a complex set of beliefs that supported women as individuals rather than from a gender perspective. She did, in fact, support the concept of women’s suffrage but did not give it priority. Victorian women suffered from lack of legal status, education, financial independence, and support from either the family or church as social institutions. Therefore, Nightingale’s conception of nursing as a secular, educated profession cannot be overemphasized as a benchmark in the developing importance of women in the social system.


Florence Nightingale was a prolific writer. Her diaries, letters, monographs, and books remain as a part of her legacy. From these documents, her ideas, values, and beliefs in a wide range of topics can be identified. The philosophical basis of modern nursing is generally seen as Nightingale’s most recognized contribution to societal change. In fact, her documents contain her philosophical assumptions and beliefs regarding all elements found in the metaparadigm of nursing. These can be formed into a conceptual model that has great utility in the practice setting and offers a framework for research conceptualization.


“Although Florence Nightingale did not speak in the terms of transpersonal human caring, her life’s work and writings reflect both the timelessness and manifestation of such a concept and philosophy for holistic nursing. Indeed, Nightingale’s blueprint for transpersonal meanings and models of caring transcends history and invites us to enter the future. For example, she called forth the full use of self, connecting the divine within and without as a source of inspiration as well as the foundation for a professional code. She called forth and made explicit the connections between and among all aspects of self, other, humanity, the environment, nature, and the cosmos as a means of learning, understanding, and connecting health, caring, and healing. Read the full article [here](#).