

Profesija u zrcalu: talijanske medicinske sestre nakon pandemije COVID-19¹

The profession in the mirror: Italian nurses after the COVID-19 pandemic

Anna La Torre

Sveučilište u Milunu, Italija. Europsko udruženje za povijest sestrinstva / University of Milan, Italy. European association for the history of nursing

Primljeno / Received May 17th 2023;

Prihvaćeno / Accepted August 28th 2023;

Autor za korespondenciju/Corresponding author: Anna La Torre, RN, MscNuring, MA History, University of Milan, Italy, Assistant professor. PhD Student in Universitat Autònoma Barcelona. Member of the International editorial council of Nursing Journal (Croatian Nurses Association). European association for the history of nursing, e-mail: latorretintori@gmail.com

Dana 5. svibnja 2023. godine Svjetska zdravstvena organizacija službeno je proglašila kraj izvanrednog zdravstvenog stanja koje je počelo 11. ožujka 2020. godine. Tri duge godine u kojima je virus prouzročio, prema procjenama WHO-a, smrt oko 20 milijuna ljudi i brojne druge društvene probleme [1].

Italija, jedna od najteže pogodjenih zemalja u Europi [2], morala se suočiti sa zdravstvenom krizom bez presedana, povećavajući i transformirajući bolničke kapacitete i intenzivnu njegu u rekordnom vremenu. Izuzetan je bio trud svih zdravstvenih djelatnika koji su svakodnevno nadoknadivali ogromne nedostatke zdravstvenih djelatnika, kao i materijalne nedostatke koji se tiču osobne zaštitne opreme. U te duge tri godine, medicinske su sestre često nazivali herojima i kao takve svakodnevno su se profesionalno, stručno i predano suočavale sa zdravstvenim izazovima koje je pandemija nametnula. Unatoč tomu, COVID-19 prouzročio je profesionalne teškoće, umor i želju za političkim i organizacijskim odgovorima.

Podrijetlo ovog zanimanja u „lijepoj zemlji“ (tal. „Bel paese“), kao i u cijeloj Europi, vrlo je staro. Njegova je prisutnost naširoko dokumentirana u tekstovima antičkog svijeta, a posebno je naznačena prisutnost medicinske sestre u rimskim legijama i *valetudinarijima*, drevnim bolnicama koje su u početku bile vojne, a zatim i civilne, a proučavaju ih latinisti i znanstvenici iz tog područja. U srednjem vijeku, u monaškom svijetu, nastaje pojam *infirmitus* koji u početku označava stanje potrebe, zatim predstavlja mjesto gdje će se pružati njega (*infirmary*), a naposljetku odnosi se na sestrinstvo posebno, odnosno tal. *infermiere* (medicinska sestra). Čak i u modernom dobu, za vrijeme Tridentskog sabora, nalazimo među velikim svećima Talijana San Camilla de Lellisa priznatog kao velikog reformatora pomoći i skrbi, a koji je djelovao u Milanu i Rimu [3].

On May 5, 2023, the World Health Organization officially declared the end of the state of emergency that began on March 11, 2020. Three long years in which the virus caused, according to WHO estimates, the death of about 20 million people and numerous other social problems [1].

Italy, one of the worst affected countries in Europe [2], had to face an unprecedented health crisis, increasing and transforming hospital capacity and intensive care in record time. The effort of all health workers who daily compensated for the enormous shortages of health workers, as well as material shortages regarding personal protective equipment, was exceptional. In those three years, nurses were often called heroes, and as such, they faced the health challenges imposed by the pandemic every day professionally and with dedication. Despite this, COVID-19 has caused professional difficulties, fatigue, and a desire for political and organizational responses.

The origin of this profession in the “beautiful country” (ital. “Bel paese”), as well as in the whole of Europe, is very old. Its presence is widely documented in the texts of the ancient world, and the presence of the nurse in the Roman legions and *valetudinaria*, ancient hospitals that were initially military and then civilian, is especially indicated, and is studied by Latinists and scholars in the field. In the middle ages, in the monastic world, the term *infirmitus* arose, which initially denotes a state of need, then represents a place where care will be provided (*infirmary*), and finally refers to nursing in particular, i. e., ital. *infermiere* (nurse). Even in modern times, during the Council of Trent, we find among the great Italian saints San Camillo de Lellis, recognized as a great reformer of help and care who worked in Milan and Rome [3].

The first law at the national level was passed in 1925 during the time of fascism. It established the creation of board-

¹ Izvorni je članak napisan na talijanskom jeziku pod naslovom: „UNA PROFESSIONE ALLO SPECCHIO: GLI INFERNIERI ITALIANI DOPO LA PANDEMIA“. S talijanskog jezika na hrvatski jezik preveo ga je Damjan Abou Aldan, a s hrvatskog jezika na engleski jezik prevela ga je Vedrana Zubak.

Prvi je zakon na nacionalnoj razini ipak donesen 1925. godine u vrijeme fašizma. Njim je uspostavljeno stvaranje internata u kojima su neudane žene studirale dvije godine i morale živjeti u zgradama u blizini bolnice u kojoj su radile i učile. Nakon Drugog svjetskog rata, dolaskom Republike, moralo se čekati do 1971. godine kad se prilagođavanjem europskim putovima ukidaju internati, medicinske škole primaju i muškarce, a škola traje 3 godine. Godine 1992. stručna diploma postaje sveučilišna, a od 2001. g. stječu se prve trogodišnje diplome iz područja sestrinstva s mogućnošću kasnjeg stjecanja diplome specijalista. Godine 1934. medicinska je sestra definirana kao pomoćni djelatnik, a njezino je profesionalno djelovanje vezano za popis zadataka koje može ili ne može obavljati. Popis poslova 1974. godine obnovljen je i neznatno povećan, ali nije promijenjen položaj pomoćnih poslova. Nakon izdavanja stručnog profila ministarskom uredbom br. 739 iz 1994. godine te proglašenjem Zakona 42 iz 1999. godine, opis se posla ukida, termin „pomoćnik“ uklanja se i medicinska sestra postaje u svakom pogledu samostalna i odgovorna za sestrinsku skrb [4].

Talijansko sestrinstvo ima bogatu povijest te je prošlo dug put, no sadašnjost sestrinstva ne cvjeta potpuno. Prema statistikama objavljenima na stranici Evropske unije [5], broj medicinskih sestara može varirati među državama članica ovisno o razlikama između zdravstvenih sustava i načinima na koje su sami stručnjaci klasificirani. Slično tomu, broj medicinskih sestara u usporedbi s drugim osobljem (kao što su liječnici) također varira između različitih sredina, na primer između bolnica i ustanova za dugotrajnu njegu.

Međutim, Njemačka je 2020. godine zabilježila najveći broj medicinskih sestara, što je značajno više od drugoplasirane Francuske (764 000 profesionalno aktivnih medicinskih sestara). Broj medicinskih sestara u ovoj zemlji bio je dvostruko veći nego u Italiji (373 000).

Ako procjenjujemo podatke nakon pandemije COVID-19, koristeći se izvješćem C. R. E. A. Sanita iz 2023. (Istraživački centar Eurostata i Ministarstva zdravstva), možemo primijetiti da je zahvaljujući izvanrednoj zdravstvenoj situaciji u Italiji došlo do značajnog povećanja osoblja javne zdravstvene službe (gotovo 2%; oko 13 000 samo u 2020. godini); povećao se i broj radnih mjesta na neodređeno vrijeme (+ 2,27%), dok je neznatno smanjen broj zaposlenih na određeno vrijeme (- 2,72%).

Manji porast bilježimo i kod liječnika (+ 0,3%) te također kod medicinskih sestara (+ 3,14%). Unatoč velikom povećanju broja osoblja, Italija i dalje ima značajno manji broj medicinskih sestara prema broju stanovnika u usporedbi s ostalim evropskim zemljama: 5,7 medicinskih sestara na 1000 stanovnika u Italiji u usporedbi s prosjekom od 9,4 u Francuskoj, Njemačkoj, Ujedinjenom Kraljevstvu i Španjolskoj. Slijedom navedenog, u talijanskoj javnoj zdravstvenoj službi na svakog liječnika dolaze 1,42 medicinske sestre, u usporedbi s 2,52 u evropskim zemljama koje se uzimaju kao referenca. Prema opsvatoriju Evropske unije, Italija je zemlja koja zapošjava manje medicinskih sestara od gotovo svih zapadnoeuropskih zemalja, a ukupan broj (6,2 medicinske sestre na 1 stanovnika) 25% je manji od prosjeka EU-a [6].

Da bi se dostigao standard spomenutih zemalja, potrebno je zaposliti barem 224 000 medicinskih sestara, iako bi taj

ing schools where unmarried women studied for two years and had to live in a building near the hospital where they worked and studied. After the Second World War, with the arrival of the Republic, we had to wait until 1971, when, adapting to European ways, boarding schools were abolished. Medical schools also accepted men, and the school lasted for three years. In 1992, the professional diploma became a university degree. Since 2001, the first three-year diplomas in nursing have been acquired, with the possibility of later obtaining a specialist diploma. In 1934, a nurse was defined as an auxiliary worker, and her professional activity was linked to a list of tasks that she could or could not perform. In 1974, the list of jobs was renewed and slightly increased, but the position of auxiliary jobs was not changed. After issuing the professional profile by ministerial decree no. 739 from 1994, and with the promulgation of Law 42 in 1999, the job description is abolished. The term "assistant" is removed, and the nurse becomes fully independent and responsible for nursing care [4].

Italian nursing has a rich history and has come a long way, but the present of nursing is not "all blooming". According to statistics published on the website of the European Union [5], the number of nurses can vary between member states depending on the differences between health systems and the ways in which the professionals are classified. Similarly, the number of nurses compared to other staff (such as doctors) also varies between different settings, for example, between hospitals and long-term care facilities.

However, Germany recorded the largest number of nurses in 2020, which is significantly more than second-placed France (764,000 professionally active nurses). The number of nurses in this country was twice as high as in Italy (373,000).

If we evaluate the data after the COVID-19 pandemic, using the 2023 report of C.R.E.A. Sanità (Eurostat Research Centre and Health Ministry), we notice that due to the status of health emergency in Italy there has been a significant increase in the public health service staff (almost 2%, about 13,000 in 2020) in the number of permanent positions also increased (+2.27%), while the number of fixed-term employment contract positions slightly decreased (-2.72%).

We also note a smaller increase among doctors (+0.3%) and nurses (+3.14%). Despite the large increase in staff numbers, Italy still has a significantly lower number of nurses per population compared to other European countries: 5.7 nurses per 1,000 inhabitants in Italy compared to an average of 9.4 in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Spain. As a result, in the Italian public health service, there are 1.42 nurses for every doctor, compared to 2.52 in the European countries taken as a reference. According to the European Union observatory, Italy is the country that employs fewer nurses than almost all Western European countries, and the total number (6.2 nurses per 1 inhabitant) is 25% lower than the EU average [6].

To reach the standard of the countries mentioned before, it would be necessary to employ at least 224,000 nurses, but this number should reach more than 320,000, given the number of the elderly population living in Europe (who is the one needing the most amount of help).

broj trebao biti veći od 320 000 ako kao polaznu točku uzimamo populaciju stariju od 75 godina (onu kojoj je pomoći najpotrebnija).

Iako su potrebne, medicinske sestre paradoksalno nisu atraktivno zanimanje. Uzimajući u obzir da je 2019. godine bilo oko 11 000 diplomanata u sestrinstvu (od oko 17 000 dostupnih mesta), jasno je da rješenje nije u povećanju broja mesta na sveučilištima jer to ne bi riješilo problem: broj dostupnih mesta i ovako nije pokriven. Prema istraživanju Ministarstva obrazovanja [7], samo 1 % petnaestogodišnjih talijanskih srednjoškolaca kaže da želi biti medicinska sestra, u usporedbi s prosjekom od 3 % u zemljama OECD-a. Osim toga, broj studenata upisanih na sveučilišne sestrinske programe u stalnom je padu od 2014. godine.

Također, u izvješću C. R.E.A. Sanita napomenuto je da Italija nije privlačna zemlja za zdravstvene djelatnike. Od ukupnog broja talijanskog medicinskog osoblja, samo 4,8 % obrazovano je u inozemstvu, za razliku od zemalja poput Švicarske koja ima 25,9 % ili Ujedinjenog Kraljevstva i Njemačke s 15,4 % odnosno ukupno za sve 8,9 %. Niske su plaće gotovo sigurno važan element među odlučujućim čimbenicima. Primjerice, u Italiji je mjesecačna plaća njegovatelja 23 % niža od prosjeka zemalja OECD-a. Jedan od utvrđenih faktora prosječna je talijanska plaća medicinske sestre koja prema podacima iz 2020. godine iznosi oko 42.000 eura bruto. Plaća se zapravo nije puno mijenjala otrprilike deset godina, od ugovora iz 2009. godine. Prosjek plaće medicinskih sestara u zemljama OECD-a iznosi 48.100 eura bruto godišnje. No, primjerice u Švicarskoj (gdje mnoge talijanske medicinske sestre odlaze raditi) plaća iznosi gotovo 56 tisuća eura, u Španjolskoj 55 tisuća, u Njemačkoj 59 tisuća, dok je u Luksemburgu 2019. godine medicinska sestra u prosjeku zaradila nešto više od 100 tisuća eura bruto godišnje [8].

No, tko su medicinske sestre koje danas rade u Italiji? Dana 12. svibnja 2023. godine povodom Međunarodnog dana medicinskih sestara, *Federazione Nazionale degli Ordini delle Professioni Infermieristiche* (FNOPI), koja predstavlja 102 pokrajinska udruženja, objavila je da ima više od 455 000 registriranih medicinskih sestara, od čega 347 947 žena i 107 257 muškaraca, te 9 426 pedijatrijskih medicinskih sestara (9 235 žena i 191 muškarac) [9]. Podaci ukazuju na to da je riječ o zanimanju u kojem još uvijek dominiraju žene. Gotovo 77 % njih službenici su Državnog zdravstvenog zavoda, a samo je 11 % slobodnih djelatnika. Njih oko 75 000 zaposlenici su privatnih ustanova i drugih tijela.

Prosječna je dob medicinskih sestara u Italiji 48,7 godina. Unatoč tomu što je riječ o jednoj od „najmlađih“ zdravstvenih profesija, nemogućnost zapošljavanja povezana s racionalizacijama i desetogodišnjim prekidima u zapošljavanju uzrokovala je porast prosječne dobi za malo manje od jedne godine svakih šest mjeseci počevši od 2018. godine kada je prosječna dob medicinskih sestara bila oko 45 godina [10].

Je li sestrinstvo profesija kojoj prijeti izumiranje? Treba se nadati da nije, no svakako je profesija u krizi koja nažalost značajno utječe na zdravstveno stanje stanovništva. Studije objavljene u značajnim časopisima govore jasno i oštvo: kad bi svaka medicinska sestra brinula o najviše 6 pacijentima, moglo bi se izbjegići najmanje 3 500 smrtnih slučajeva godišnje, a povećanje broja medicinskih sestara od 10 %

Although necessary, nurses are paradoxically not an attractive profession. Considering that in 2019, there were about 11,000 graduates in nursing (out of 17,000 available places) the solution is not to increase the number of places at universities because that would not solve the problem: the number of available places is not covered. According to a study by the Ministry of Education [7], only 1% of 15-year-old Italian high school students say they want to be a nurse, compared to an average of 3% in OECD countries. In addition, the number of students enrolled in university nursing programs has been in steady decline since 2014.

Also, the report of C.R.E.A. Sanita notes that Italy is not an attractive country for healthcare professionals. Of the total number of Italian medical personnel, only 4.8% were educated abroad, in contrast to countries such as Switzerland, which has 25.9%, or the United Kingdom and Germany with 15.4%, or a total of 8.9%. Low salary is almost certainly an element among the deciding factors. For example, in Italy, the monthly salary of caregivers is 23% lower than the average of OECD countries. One of the established factors is the average Italian salary of a nurse, which, according to data from 2020, is around 42,000 euros gross (per year). The salary hasn't changed much for about ten years since the 2009 contract. The average salary of nurses in OECD countries is 48,100 euros gross per year. But, for example, in Switzerland, where many Italian nurses go to work, the salary is almost 56 thousand euros. In Spain, the salary is 55 thousand, in Germany, 59 thousand, while in Luxembourg, in 2019, a nurse earned on average a little more than 100 thousand euros gross annually [8].

But who are the nurses working in Italy today? On May 12, 2023, on the occasion of International Nurses Day, the *Federazione Nazionale degli Ordini delle Professioni Infermieristiche* (FNOPI), which represents 102 provincial associations, announced that there are more than 455,000 registered nurses, of which 347,947 are women and 107,257 men, and 9,426 pediatric nurses (9,235 women and 191 men) [9]. The data indicate that it is a profession still dominated by women. Almost 77% of them are employees of the State Health Institute, and only 11% are freelancers. About 75,000 of them are employees of private institutions and other bodies.

The average age of nurses in Italy is 48.7 years. Despite being one of the "youngest" healthcare professions, the lack of employment associated with rationalizations and ten-year hiatuses caused the average age to increase by just under a year every six months starting in 2018 when the average age of nurses was about 45 years [10].

Is nursing a profession in danger of extinction? One should hope that it is not, but nursing is surely in crisis, which, unfortunately, has a significant impact on the population's health. Studies published in major journals speak clearly and firmly: if each nurse cared for a maximum of 6 patients, at least 3,500 deaths per year could be avoided, and a 10% increase in the number of nurses corresponds to a 7% reduction in mortality [11]. Caring for those who need care means taking care of yourself. To compensate for the shortcomings, the Italian government introduced the job of a health worker (ital. *operatore sanitario*) to whom it tries to give greater responsibilities.

odgovara smanjenju smrtnosti od 7 % [11]. Skrbiti o onima kojima je skrb potrebna zapravo znači skrbiti o sebi. Da bi nadoknadiла nedostatke, talijanska je vlada uvela posao zdravstvenog radnika (tal. *operatore sanitario*) kojem nastoji dati sve veće odgovornosti.

Postoji strah da to nije rješenje, ali moraju se stvoriti najbolji uvjeti da „najljepše od umijeća“ (tal. *la più bella delle arti*) postane profesija za mlade generacije. Potrebno je povećati omjer broja medicinskih sestara i pacijenata, imati veće poštovanje prema medicinskim sestrama koje moraju biti prisutnije u političkim pregovorima i pregovorima o plaćama. Potrebno je pružiti priliku za ostvarivanje karijere uz relativno povećanje odgovornosti i edukacije te uz odgovarajuće plaće. Rješenja bi moglo biti mnogo, ali prije svega to je određivanje odgovornosti i kompetencija koje su jasne kako medicinskim sestrama, tako i organizacijama, ali i cijeloj populaciji.

Naša budućnost, budućnost naših starijih i naše djece vezana je za medicinske sestre, stoga je briga o sestrama briga o nama samima. Kriznih razdoblja u našoj povijesti nikad nije nedostajalo, ali na nama je da smognemo snage prebroditi ih i iz njih izići bolji.

There is a fear that this is not the solution, but the best conditions must be created so that “the most beautiful of the arts” (*ital. la più bella delle arti*) becomes a profession for the young generation. It is necessary to increase the ratio of the number of nurses to patients and to have more respect for nurses who must be more present in political and salary negotiations. It is also necessary to provide an opportunity to pursue a career with a relative increase in responsibility and education, and with appropriate salaries. There could be many solutions, but first of all, it is the determination of responsibilities and competencies that are clear both to nurses and organizations but also to the entire population.

Our future, the future of our elders and our children, is tied to nurses, so taking care of nurses is taking care of ourselves. There have always been crisis periods in our history, but it is up to us to find the strength to overcome them and be better.

References

- [1] Statement on the fifteenth meeting of the IHR (2005) Emergency Committee on the COVID-19 pandemic (pristupljeno: 6. 5. 2023.). Dostupno na: [https://www.who.int/news/item/05-05-2023-statement-on-the-fifteenth-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-pandemic](https://www.who.int/news/item/05-05-2023-statement-on-the-fifteenth-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-pandemic).
- [2] Sorveglianza integrata COVID-19: i principali dati nazionali (pristupljeno: 9. 5. 2023.). Dostupno na: <https://www.epicentro.iss.it/coronavirus/sars-cov-2-sorveglianza-dati>
- [3] Celeri Bellotti G, Destrebecq A, Storia dell’assistenza e dell’assistenza infermieristica in Occidente: dalla preistoria all’età moderna. Padova: Piccin; 2014.
- [4] Sironi C, L’infermiere in Italia: storia di una professione. Roma: Carocci Faber; 2012.
- [5] Healthcare personnel statistics – nursing and caring professionals (pristupljeno: 10. 5. 2023.). Dostupno na: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Healthcare_personnel_statistics_-_nursing_and_caring_professionals&oldid=577671#Healthcare_personnel_E2.80.93_nurses
- [6] OECD. European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Italy: Country Health Profile 2021, State of Health in the EU, OECD Publishing, Paris. 2021.
- [7] Domani il Safer Internet Day 2016, “Play your part for a better Internet!” Il Ministro Giannini lancia la campagna del Miur contro il cyber-bullismo La Polizia di Stato porta in 100 capoluoghi l’iniziativa “Una vita da social” Convegno dell’Associazione SOS Il Telefono Azzurro Onlus alla Camera dei Deputati L’indagine: il 17% dei giovanissimi è sempre connesso (pristupljeno: 10. 5. 2023.). Dostupno na: <https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/ricerca?q=sondaggio%20studenti%20universit%C3%A0&scope=this-site>
- [8] OECD Health Statistics 2022. Dostupno na: <https://stat.link/ju7of8>
- [9] 12 maggio 2023, Giornata internazionale dell’infermiere (pristupljeno: 14. 5. 2023.). Dostupno na: https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/news/p3_2_1_1.jsp?lingua=italiano&menu=notizie&p=dalministero&id=6249#:~:text=Arte%20e%20Scienza%20in%20evoluzione,e%209426%20infermieri%20pediatrici%20italiani
- [10] Dossier infermieri. Numeri, carenza, retribuzioni e formazione (pristupljeno: 10. 5. 2023.). Dostupno na: https://www.quotidianosanita.it/lavoro-e-professioni/articolo.php?approfondimento_id=17327
- [11] Shekelle PG, Nurse-patient ratios as a patient safety strategy: a systematic review. Annals of internal medicine, 2013; 158 (5), 404–9. <https://doi.org/10.7326/0003-4819-158-5-201303051-00007>