
FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

The Pioneering Path of Florence Nightingale

We would like to draw attention to the knowledge and expertise of Florence Nightingale who at the end of the 19th century had already recognised many of the issues connected with the importance of healthy air and the transmission of disease so many years ago.

Florence Nightingale (12 May 1820 – 13 August 1910) is a famous British nurse, remembered as “the Angel” or “the Lady with the Lamp”. She dedicated herself to looking after wounded soldiers during the Crimean War (1853–1856). However, her talents did not stop there. She was also a social entrepreneur, a statistician, and a nursing educator. Her interest in hospital architecture, together with her innovative work in hospital design is regarded as very far-reaching, and still influences hospital architects and designers nowadays.

She advocated and created hospital wards that placed the utmost importance on ventilation. She established the Nightingale School of Nursing as a part of the newly built London St. Thomas’ Hospital. This was the first non-religious nursing school in the world. It is now a part of King’s College London

Florence Nightingale’s *Notes on Nursing*, published more than 160 years ago, contains the following remarkable recommendations in Chapter 1. She expanded on these later in her notes.

“The first principle of nursing (as well as of healthy housing and living) is to keep the indoor air as fresh as the outdoor air. And this is achieved by opening windows...”

“The proper way to open windows...”

“The importance of ventilation in schools and workspaces...”

Incredibly she then goes on to advocate the absolute necessity of an air-testing apparatus. She says:

Dr Angus Smith’s air test, if it could be made of simpler application, would be invaluable to use in every sleeping room and sick room. Just as without the use of a thermometer, no nurse should ever put a patient into a bath, so should no nurse, or mother, or supervisor, be without the air test in any ward, nursery, or sleeping room. However, for practical use, it must be as simple and compact as a thermometer.

Florence Nightingale recognised the importance of air quality and the need for a device to measure it, something similar to a thermometer for measuring temperature. She understood that maintaining fresh and clean air was crucial for the health and well-being of patients as well as individuals in various other settings. However, at that time, such an invaluable device for measuring fresh air did not exist. The availability of such a measuring instrument was her dream.

Furthermore, Nightingale lists five essential points to create a healthy house:

1. Pure air
2. Pure water
3. Efficient sewage discharge
4. Cleanliness
5. Sunlight

She emphasises that without these, no house can be healthy. If it is deficient in the above, it will be unhealthy, and will lead to incidences of various diseases, including infectious diseases.

In 2020, coinciding with the bicentennial of Nightingale's birth, the world was struck by the COVID-19 pandemic, which at the present time, has now entered its fourth year.

Notes on Nursing, her seminal work, was written as a result of her unwavering passion for unchanging truths, and her constant dedicated efforts. Her achievements were supported by a broad vision for all of humanity. *Notes on Nursing* was shaped by her clear reasoning, her use of objective statistics and by her unwavering belief in her message. Within this message, there lies a universality that the present world, living with the COVID-19 crisis, needs to recognise and acknowledge.

The healthy world envisioned by Nightingale is now entirely within reach. It is a world that can be achieved in its entirety.

To the people of today, Nightingale calls out, urging them to wake up. It is within this awakening that the path pioneered by Nightingale will expand and unfold.

