

# Documento *ad usum et beneficium*

## *O Enfermeiro Português* Journal – 1929-1930

Revista *O Enfermeiro Português* – 1929-1930

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### Abstract

The purpose of *ad usum et beneficium* is to identify and disclose documents which, given their value and significance at a particular time, represent a contribution to the history of the profession.

We wish to introduce *O Enfermeiro Português*, *Revista dos Profissionais de Enfermagem e propaganda do Gremio dos Enfermeiros de Terra e Mar do Norte de Portugal – Associação de Classe* (period 1929-1930). The first five issues of the Journal, published between 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1929, and 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1930, belonged to the private collection of Alberto da Silva Mourão, a distinct individuality of Portuguese Nursing, and were offered by his daughter, Professor Alda Mourão.

Without looking in depth into the various topics that were addressed in each issue of the Journal, which may be searched according to each subject, the method of analysis of this work included the following components: description of reference data issue by issue; identification of different categories of information; and synthesis of some central topics that were recurrent throughout the main pages of the five issues.

The various opinion texts focused on the common and persistent concerns of the end of 1929, such as nurses' lack of motivation, the injustices related to the recognition of the profession's value, the lack of rigour and standardisation of training programs, the moral and value crisis, and the abundance of healers and others acting as nurses who did nothing to help dignify the class.

We do not know whether the Journal *O Enfermeiro Português* continued to be published or for how long, since we only have access to this specific collection. Anyone interested in expanding the historical study of the issues of that time period, which included the crisis of values, the disorganisation of the class, the crisis of leadership, the wars between classes and groups, and the legitimate longings of a high value class in a world of suffering, may consult the documents in the old books section of the Nursing School of Coimbra.

Keywords: history of nursing; professional organization.

### Resumo

*Ad usum et beneficium* tem como finalidade identificar e divulgar documentos que, pelo seu valor e significado numa época específica, representam um contributo para a história da profissão.

É nosso objetivo apresentar *O Enfermeiro Português*, *Revista dos profissionais de enfermagem e propaganda do Gremio dos Enfermeiros de Terra e Mar do Norte de Portugal – Associação de Classe* (biénio de 1929-1930). Os primeiros cinco números da Revista, publicados entre 31 de outubro de 1929 e 15 de setembro de 1930, pertenciam à coleção particular de Alberto da Silva Mourão distinta figura da Enfermagem Portuguesa, e foram oferecidos por sua filha Professora Doutora Alda Mourão.

O método de análise da obra, sem aprofundar as diferentes questões tratadas em cada Revista, que podem ser pesquisadas em função de cada assunto, integrou os seguintes componentes: legenda de dados de referência número a número; identificação de diferentes categorias de informação; síntese de algumas questões centrais que são recorrentes ao longo das principais páginas dos cinco números editados.

Os textos de opinião são diversos mas focam a tônica em preocupações comuns e persistentes no final de 1929 como seja: a situação motivacional negativa dos enfermeiros, as injustiças relativas ao reconhecimento do valor do exercício, a falta de rigor e de harmonização dos programas de formação, a crise moral e de valores, o excesso de curandeiros e outros disfarçados de enfermeiros que em nada ajudam a dignificar a classe. Não sabemos se a Revista *O Enfermeiro Português* continuou a ser editada e por quanto tempo, uma vez que apenas temos acesso a este acervo particular. Quem desejar aprofundar o estudo histórico das questões à época, que percorriam a crise de valores, a desorganização da classe, a crise de liderança, as guerras de classes e grupos, e as legítimas aspirações de uma classe de elevado valor num mundo em sofrimento, poderá consultar os documentos na seção de livro antigo da Escola Superior de Enfermagem de Coimbra.

Palavras-chave: história da enfermagem; organização profissional.

### Resumen

*Ad usum et beneficium* tiene como finalidad identificar y divulgar documentos que, por su valor y significado en una determinada época, representan una contribución importante para la historia de la profesión.

Nuestro objetivo es presentar *O Enfermeiro Português*, *Revista dos Profissionais de Enfermagem e propaganda do Gremio dos Enfermeiros de Terra e Mar do Norte de Portugal – Associação de Classe* (1929-1930). Los cinco primeros números de la revista, publicados entre el 31 de octubre de 1929 y el 15 de septiembre de 1930, pertenecían a la colección privada de Alberto da Silva Mourão, una figura destacada del ámbito de la enfermería en Portugal, y fueron donados por su hija, la Prof. Dra. Alda Mourão.

El método de análisis de la obra, sin profundizar en las diferentes cuestiones que se tratan en cada revista, las cuales se pueden investigar en función de cada asunto, incluyó los siguientes componentes: explicación de los datos de referencia, número a número; identificación de las diferentes categorías de información, y síntesis de algunas cuestiones centrales que se repiten a lo largo de las páginas principales de los cinco números editados.

Los textos de opinión son diversos, pero se centran en preocupaciones comunes y persistentes de finales del año 1929, por ejemplo: la motivación negativa de los enfermeros, las injusticias relativas al reconocimiento del valor del ejercicio, la falta de rigor y armonización de los programas de formación, la crisis moral y de valores, y el exceso de curanderos y otros falsos enfermeros que no ayudan a dignificar la profesión.

No sabemos si se continuó editando la revista *O Enfermeiro Português* y por cuánto tiempo, puesto que solo tenemos acceso a este acervo privado. Aquellos que deseen profundizar en el estudio histórico de las cuestiones de la época, que giraban en torno a la crisis de valores, la desorganización de la profesión, la crisis de liderazgo, las guerras de organizaciones y grupos profesionales y las aspiraciones legítimas de un colectivo de elevado valor en un mundo de sufrimiento, pueden consultar los documentos que se encuentran en la sección de libro antiguo de la Escuela Superior de Enfermería de Coimbra.

Palabras clave: historia de la enfermería; organización profesional.

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## Introduction

Ad usum et beneficium aims at identifying and disclosing documents which, given their value and significance at a particular time, represent a contribution to the history of the profession. In this way, it is possible to recover works, complete series, and discover different editions, which are owned by private individuals and gain special value when the collection is completed.

In this case, we present a series of five documents (Issues nº 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) of the Journal *O Enfermeiro Português*, edited by *Profissionais de Enfermagem e propaganda do Gremio dos Enfermeiros de Terra e Mar do Norte de Portugal – Associação de Classe*, period 1929-1930 (Figure 1).



FIGURE 1 – Colection of five Journals  
*O Enfermeiro Português*

Given their potential for synthesis, periodical editions are always considered as effective means of communication with scientific communities, professionals and citizens. There are different types of periodical editions depending on their purpose and the targeted reader's profile.

Scientific journals are an important source of dissemination. At present, their survival is discussed within the scope of bibliometric evaluation processes, impact ratings and rankings. In this competitive field, some scientific journals in nursing struggle to present the specificity of their object of study, social value and international dimension.

Looking back 80 years, in 1929, the Journal *O Enfermeiro Português* certainly aimed at a much more modest goal, specifically focused on the development of the profession and dignity of nurses' work. At the time, it represented the valuable initiative of a professional association, the *Grémio dos Enfermeiros*

*de Terra e Mar do Norte de Portugal*. Its Director, Mário Afonso, also President of the Association for the period 1929-1930, announced the urgent need for a broad national debate on the social value of the profession, the regulation of the theoretical and practical training and, most of all, the clarification of role in terms of interprofessional action. He called for fair merit by the medical class and legal provisions that would allow distinguishing the work of healers from the work of professionals trained in officially recognised schools.

In short and without attempting to provide a deeper review, the five issues of the Journal *O Enfermeiro Português*, published between October, 1929, and September, 1930, will be presented. The first four issues maintained their periodicity and the responsibility of the Management and Administration teams. At the time, the journal represented a huge challenge, apparently difficult to support, not only because of the controversies that divided the professional class, but also due to the interprofessional quarrels and especially given the fact that all great works are not always easy to support, unless at the expense of much commitment and generosity of few. The courageous board of the journal intended to address in a continuous and persistent manner the major topics that diverted the professional class of its original purpose and mission, and generate a transformation movement capable of bringing together the goodwill of all professional class associations and nurses at a national level.

We are left with the disturbing curiosity to explain this cry of revolt of nurses against so many asymmetries at the time in terms of training and professional performance, especially because years before, in 1920, Nursing Schools, as is was the case of the Hospitals School of the University of Coimbra, had already approved a regulation and established two-year general nursing courses and a one-year supplementary course.

We do not know how long this much desired Journal survived, which was born full of radiance and hope amidst great professional anguish to generate a debate on the defence of the profession. We observed that issue nº 5 had a longer break between publications, reappearing only 8 months later, on account of administrative problems (we are unaware of their nature). Issue nº 5 presented a new Management team, Board, Editorial headquarters and

Printing location. On the first page of issue nº 5, the Board asked for their subscribers and advertisers' benevolence, given that they had to reduce the number of pages to maintain the continuity of the edition, without fear of new suspension.

These valuable documents were offered by Professor Alda Mourão, daughter of the Distinguished Nurse Alberto da Silva Mourão, a leading figure of Portuguese nursing, and former Supervisor and Director of Nursing at the Coimbra University Hospitals.

### ***O Enfermeiro Português***

Revista dos Profissionais de Enfermagem e propaganda do Gremio dos Enfermeiros de Terra e Mar do Norte de Portugal – Associação de classe (period 1929-1930)

ISSUES published between 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1929, and 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1930

Year I - Issue nº 1 (Figure 2), Porto, 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1929, price - 1\$00 (1 escudo)

Revista quinzenal dos Profissionais de Enfermagem e propaganda do Gremio dos Enfermeiros de Terra e Mar do Norte de Portugal – Associação de classe (period 1929-1930)

Administrator: Gaspar Gradim

Editorial Secretariat: Custódio Tavares

Director: Mário Afonso

Copywriter: Oscar Sant'Ana

Typesetting and printing: Tipografia Gonçalves; Porto

Headquarters: R. dos Caldeireiros, 144-2º - Porto

Structure: 16 pages (24x33), 3-column layout.



FIGURE 2 – Issue Nº 1 of the Journal *O Enfermeiro Português*

Year I - Issue nº 2 (Figure 3), Porto, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1929, price - 1\$00 (1 escudo)

Revista bi-mensal dos Profissionais de Enfermagem e propaganda do Gremio dos Enfermeiros de Terra e Mar do Norte de Portugal – Associação de classe (period 1929-1930)

Administrator: Gaspar Gradim

Editorial Secretariat: Custódio Tavares

Director: Mário Afonso

Copywriter: Oscar Sant'Ana

Typesetting and printing: Tipografia Gonçalves; Porto

Headquarters: R. dos Caldeireiros, 144-2º - Porto (PORTUGAL)

Structure: 16 pages (24x33), 3-column layout.



FIGURE 3 – Issue Nº 2 of the Journal *O Enfermeiro Português*

Year I – Issue nº 3 (Figure 4), Porto, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1929, price - 1\$00 (1 escudo)

Revista bi-mensal dos Profissionais de Enfermagem e propaganda do Gremio dos Enfermeiros de Terra e Mar do Norte de Portugal – Associação de classe (period 1929-1930)

Administrator: Gaspar Gradim

Editorial Secretariat: Custódio Tavares

Director: Mário Afonso

Copywriter: Oscar Sant'Ana

Typesetting and printing: Tipografia Gonçalves; Porto

Headquarters: R. dos Caldeireiros, 144-2º - Porto (PORTUGAL)

Structure: 16 pages (24x33), 3-column layout.



FIGURE 4 – Issue Nº 3 of the Journal *O Enfermeiro Português*



Year I – Issuenº 4 (Figure 5), Porto, 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1929, price - 1\$00 (1 escudo)  
 Revista bi-mensal dos Profissionais de Enfermagem e propaganda do Gremio dos Enfermeiros de Terra e Mar do Norte de Portugal – Associação de classe (period 1929-1930)  
 Administrator: Gaspar Gradim  
 Editorial Secretariat: Custódio Tavares  
 Director: Mário Afonso  
 Copywriter: Oscar Sant'Ana  
 Typesetting and printing: Tipografia Gonçalves; Porto  
 Headquarters: R. dos Caldeiros, 144-2º - Porto (PORTUGAL)  
 Structure: 14 pages (24x33), 3-column layout.



FIGURE 5 – Issue N° 4 of the Journal  
*O Enfermeiro Português*

Year II - Issuenº 5 (Figure 6), Porto, 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1930, price - 1\$00 (1 escudo)  
 Revista bi-mensal de Defesa dos Profissionais de Enfermagem  
 Administrator: Tomaz Batalha  
 Directors: Custódio Tavares and Mário Afonso (Editor)  
 Typesetting and printing: Tipografia Vª de Julio Batalha  
 Headquarters: Rua das Flores, 291-2º - Porto  
 Structure: 8 pages (24x33), 3-column layout.



FIGURE 6 – Issue N° 5 of the Journal  
*O Enfermeiro Português*

## Categories of Topics

**MAIN TOPIC:** it almost always concerned class issues and professional dignity. A section on hygiene and prophylaxis by the Liga Portuguesa de Profilaxia Social (Portuguese League of Social Prophylaxis), called **CATECHISM OF PUERICULTURE**: which was discontinued after issue nº 5, “targeted for censorship”.

**VARIOUS OPINION TEXTS:** referring to nurses’ motivation; injustices that concerned the recognition of the profession’s value; the lack of rigour and standardisation of training programs; the moral and value crisis; healers and others acting as nurses who did nothing to help dignify the class; appeals for the organisation of a 2<sup>nd</sup> nursing conference; responses to commentators from other journals, etc...  
**ADVERTISEMENTS:** about 50 advertising cuttings distributed throughout the Journal. Different advertisements aimed at helping readers with various needs, such as enteral-lubricator for constipation; *fosfiodoglicina* as an alternative to cod liver oil for facilitating growth; Ambrinol for healing whooping cough; *Energeina* Liquor as a powerful restorative tonic; Pine anti-asthmatic powder; Alcalase for the stomach; Depuritol as a depurative to cure syphilis, whose symptoms appear during foliage season....; Thalassan for sea sickening; Watercress for cough, bronchitis and respiratory infections, rickets, scrofula and many others...

## Synthesis of some central issues which were recurrent throughout the main pages of the five published issues

*O Enfermeiro Português* took upon itself the arduous task of maintaining a regular edition and, in an open manner, welcoming the contributions of Portuguese nurses to the debate on the topics which threatened the credibility of the profession and demanded an urgent organisation of the professional class at the time. The 1<sup>st</sup> Nursing Conference was an important moment and a 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference was essential to honestly discuss the difficult working conditions and disillusionment felt by many nurses, who were governed by incompetent leaders. Some disturbing topics included the lack of homogeneity of nursing training curricula and the existence of poorly prepared and unqualified professionals who gave a negative image of the profession and allowed others to fiercely and unfairly criticise those who completed their degrees.

When the periodical edition called *Revista de Defesa dos Profissionais de Enfermagem* (Journal for Nursing Professionals' Defence) was launched, the board of directors began by saluting the prestigious medical class, clinical and nursing associations and all Portuguese nurses. It emphasised that the Journal had resulted from the efforts and goodwill of a small group of people, without any type of support, and that it was completely devoid of prejudice and proselytism. The Journal presented itself to the public as an advocate for the class prerogatives and fought for the collective interests that emerged during nurses' careers. The board stressed that *O Enfermeiro Português* would vigorously fight against healers, the curious-minded, charlatans and all those who, in any way, would undermine the interests of nursing.

### **The issues of status and role**

The professional class organisation, being the central theme of the Journal and extending over the five publications, often intersected with matters of status and role. The first issue of the Journal cited the controversy concerning the title "the illegal practice of medicine", which had been published by the Journal *Medicina Contemporânea* ("Contemporary Medicine") in two articles in issues nº 19 (May 9th, 1926) and nº 49 (December 5th, 1926). In these two articles, a renowned professor of the University of Coimbra presented the conclusions that he had gathered from the conference which was held for the occasion of the "medical days" of Coimbra. The words of the professor were righteously criticised, particularly because of the dismay that his statements had caused among the nursing class. The professor mentioned that:

"... practice medicine illegally... those who have passed no exams in degrees qualifying them for the legitimate exercise of medicine - pharmacists, druggists, herbalists, nurses, orthopaedists, electricians, blacksmiths, priests, religious sisters, witches, sorcerers, women of virtue, virtuous boys, etc.,... but also midwives acting outside of their powers, non-medical dentists, medicine students, among others..." (A Liga Portuguesa de Profilaxia Social e a sua obra: Uma entrevista que não pareceu, mas foi, 1929, p. 6).

According to the author, it was offensive to: "... mixing nurses with healers, witches, blacksmiths, etc., in a heterogeneous *mélange*... the Portuguese

nurse is currently not that loutish, idiotic, sly individual, who dozens of years ago came from the village to the city to work in hospitals as a servant and developed the hard way, without culture, without instruction, and without knowledge. Today, nurses are intelligent, educated, cultivated, devoid of ignorance and know how far they can go, without letting others trample on them.... the nurse is the only graduated professional who, in a general way, studies human anatomy and physiology and all other areas related to public health... besides the respected doctors, there are the nurses... it is necessary to dignify the class and that doctors themselves protect it and ensure its defence... recognising the nurse as the person who most often replaces them and who is their main covert collaborator in their professional triumphs" (A Liga Portuguesa de Profilaxia Social e a sua obra: Uma entrevista que não pareceu, mas foi, 1929, p. 6).

There were several manifestations of joy with the publication of the 1st issue of the Journal, which was expected to become a lighthouse and an expressive force appealing to the fight for the nobility of the profession, fiercely combating healers, the curious-minded, charlatans...

### **The problems inherent to class organisation and identity**

On the main page of Issue nº 2, it was stated that by the end of 1928 there were four nurses' associations in Portugal, which comprised a certain number of members and represented a given class faction. According to the author, their most important work had been the preparation of the 1st Nursing Conference, held in Lisbon and organised by the southern associations. In the interest of national nursing and interpreting the overall feeling, appeals were made aiming at a 2nd Nursing Conference. Nursing is a respectable force, "it is estimated that there are 4000 nurses in Portugal, islands and colonies, encompassing civilians and military staff" (A necessidade da organização profissional, 1929, p. 2). At the time, there were the following professional class associations: "Associação de Classe dos Enfermeiros e Pessoal dos Hospitais Cíveis Portugueses; Associação de Classe dos Enfermeiros e Enfermeiras da Zona Sul; Associação de Classe dos Enfermeiros de Ambos os Sexos do Porto; Associação Escolar dos Alunos da Escola Profissional de Enfermagem de Lisboa; Gremio dos Enfermeiros de Terra e Mar do Norte de

*Portugal*" (A necessidade da organização profissional, 1929, p. 6).

### **The emphasis on a negative social morality which hinders union**

In the last issue, emphasis was again placed on the effort needed to eradicate some people's negative impression of nurses. Different authors systematically mentioned the moral debacle in which society was living, in such a way that the concept of *union* was considered a utopia. A pessimistic scenario was presented (minds atrophied by moral crisis and frayed and confusing tempers).

"As a great cataclysm that swept the whole world, harbouring the most unbridled disasters in which greed almost completely obliterated everyone's character and tranquillity disappeared from all households ... nurses particularly suffer when nursing is governed by incompetent, almost illiterate people, who ignore even the most basic precepts of therapy, prophylaxis and even hygiene, usurping the specific functions of the class." (Curandeiros?, 1930, p. 2). This called for an energetic fight against the lack of professional organisation and nurses' sadness and monotony for them to regain the legitimate right to be accepted as a relevant and worthy profession.

### **Legal recognition of nursing diplomas**

The issue of professional education

According to Mário Afonso, there were schools for civilian and military nurses in the country. Their programmes were complex but different, and technical education was heterogeneously widespread, in such a way that some acquired a more superficial and others a more in-depth knowledge of anatomy and physiology. The author proposed a detailed programme for the nursing degree, and rigorous criteria for the selection of candidates to the nursing profession. He also proposed that Schools should be run by professors who understood the nurses' responsibilities and that the Schools acted as facilitators of practical teaching.

### **Conclusion**

The journal *O Enfermeiro Português* emerged in a period of great social and professional unrest, with the

desire to instil hope in the dispersed and discouraged group of Portuguese nurses. Like a cry for help, it soars high and raises the lamp that can help illuminate the path and open an avenue of hope. However, certainly not everyone hears the cries for help or sees the significance of the works that were created with effort, at least not enough to acknowledge and support them. We are left with the curiosity to know whether the noble Journal had followers, how many more issues were published or the editorial frequency. The uncertainty and discouragement that, at the time, were embedded in both the society and the profession make us reflect on the uncertainty felt today, in the 21st century, more than 80 years later. Nowadays, we also doubt that union around clear goals that project us into a viable and undispersed future is possible. We fear some discredit and devaluation, with stages which we considered to be consolidated being skipped. At present, we also face a serious crisis, which is not just an economic crisis, and we are confronted with levels of uncertainty and unpredictability that almost paralyse our initiative and willingness to act. Indeed, history is a science, but only a few pay attention to its signs. The most important thing that Humankind should learn is that nothing is certain in life, as António Correia de Oliveira mentioned in the title of Issue nº 1 of the Journal *O Enfermeiro Português*, Catechism of Puericulture:

De mau grão nunca bom pão  
Conforme: há sempre maneira  
De apurar a má farinha,  
Passando-a em boa peneira  
(*Dizeres do Povo*)

(Bad grain cannot produce good bread  
Meaning: there is always a way  
To improve bad flour,  
Passing it through a good sieve)  
(*Dizeres do Povo*)

We are grateful to Alberto da Silva Mourão for carefully preserving these copies, which have now been offered to us by his daughter Alda Mourão. If someone is aware of or possesses other issues of this Journal that have eventually been published, please contact us because such sacrifices to create ideals of hope are still alive in the history of professions.



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