

# NURSING DIVERSITY

## 9: Nursing environments



**Photograph 'Nursing Rocks', Gold winner of the 15 years and under category, Care on Camera 2015**

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This image shows an occupational health nurse inside the Rock of Gibraltar. Today nursing takes place in some surprising settings, but this has not always been the case. Before the rise of hospitals and asylums in the 19th century, many informal nurses were hired to tend to people at home. However as nursing the sick moved onto wards with trained nurses, care in the home became less popular.

### Community nursing

Organised district nursing, where nurses would visit people in their homes, began in England in Liverpool in 1859. After witnessing the care provided to his wife, philanthropist William Rathbone continued her services so that people could access free care. He went on to work with Florence Nightingale, developing a model for district nursing that became a standard for the profession.

Industrial nursing, which is now called occupational health nursing, was also on the increase, with nurses working in heavy industries such as shipbuilding and mining to safeguard the health of workers.

### Nursing independence

In the 1960s and 70s, the boundary between the work of doctors and nurses began to shift. Nurses began to undertake complex clinical assessments, diagnosed illness, prescribed treatment and designed plans of care. The 1980s and 90s saw a dramatic rise in the number of nurse specialist roles – nurses focusing their expertise on one medical condition or type of treatment.

This allowed nurses to work more independently and nursing now takes place wherever it is needed. You can find nurses on cruise ships and aeroplanes, in warzones and disaster areas, as well as in schools and workplaces. Nurses also work in research helping to make health care improvements and teach student nurses in universities.

Caring for people in their homes has also once again become a normal part of health care. Technology has allowed more freedom to treat patients at home and help them to avoid long stays in hospitals as much as possible.

### Activity

Imagine you are a nurse in one of the following settings: a cruise ship; the Armed Forces; a prison. What type of cases do you think you would have to treat and what would the

challenges be? What types of technology have become available in the last 100 years that would help your role? What public health challenges might exist?

**Fact:** Nurses contribute to films and TV shows as medical advisers – making sure that situations, illnesses and treatments as realistic as possible.

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