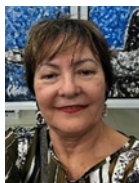


Correspondent
author



Maria Itayra Padilha
E-mail: itayra.padilha@ufsc.br

Strategy to Strengthen the History of Nursing in Latin America through the Virtual Health Library/Nursing

Estratégia de fortalecimento da história da enfermagem na América Latina via Biblioteca Virtual de Saúde/Enfermagem

Estrategia para el fortalecimiento de la historia de la enfermería en América Latina a través de la Biblioteca Virtual en Salud/Enfermería

Francisco Felix LANA^I
Maria Itayra PADILHA^{II}

^I Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Escola de Enfermagem. Belo Horizonte, MG, Brasil.

^{II} Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Enfermagem. Florianópolis, SC, Brasil.

How to cite (Vancouver):

Lana FF, Padilha MI. Strategy to Strengthen the History of Nursing in Latin America through the Virtual Health Library/Nursing [Editorial]. Hist Enferm Rev Eletr. 2026;17:e002. <https://doi.org/10.51234/here.2026.v17.528>.

Information, in all phases of its cycle, is the indispensable raw material for the development of the sciences, constituting the theoretical framework accumulated across different fields of knowledge⁽¹⁾. Without information, investigations and their respective communications would not be possible, nor would disciplines and professions have the credibility and respect needed to be accepted by both lay and specialized audiences. Nursing is no different: it requires information in order to consolidate itself as a science and to support care practices in health and assistance in illness.

Since 1967, the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME) has successfully developed the capacity of countries in the Region to create and operate national scientific and technical information systems, aligned with new information and communication technologies as well as with new organizational paradigms and approaches to information management. In recent years, the growing demand for technical cooperation in Internet-based products and services has required significant changes. The proposal to create and develop the Virtual Health Library (VHL), under BIREME's leadership, represents an expansion of the technical cooperation model by promoting the decentralized production and operation of multimedia information sources, network-connected, with direct and universal access, without geographic or time limitations. Its purpose is to respond in an organized and efficient manner to the emerging needs of countries to produce and operate integrated health information sources on the Internet.

The Nursing Virtual Health Library (VHL) began its development in 1998 with the creation of the Nursing Database (BDENF), an initiative of the School of Nursing at the *Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais* (UFMG, Federal University of Minas Gerais), in partnership with the Baeta Viana Library and BIREME, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and the World Health Organization (WHO). Its guiding principles included the information needs of professionals in the field, the absence of a national reference work in nursing, the possibility of expanding the Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature (LILACS) database to include the nursing area, and the opportunity to contribute to the registration of the field's intellectual output as well as to the dissemination of its literature. This initiative was later expanded into a large-scale project with national and international reach. Therefore, on September 26, 2003, in Belo Horizonte, under the coordination of the Director of the UFMG School of Nursing, Dr. Francisco Félix Lana, the first Meeting of the Nursing VHL Project was held. Representatives from UFMG units, BIREME, Nursing Schools across the country, *Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas em Enfermagem/ Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem* (CEPEN/ABEn), and Editorial Boards of Nursing Journals participated.

The central objective of the new library is to develop the Nursing VHL in accordance with the standards, methodologies, components, and information and communication technologies used in the VHL, coordinated by the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME/PAHO). It aims to contribute to the development of nursing - both academic and clinical - by promoting access to informational products and services in the field, establishing itself as a space for equitable access to nursing knowledge for the dissemination of scientific and technical information, ensuring high availability and reliability in the operation of information sources. After two years of development, the formal launch of the Nursing VHL Brazil took place at the 57th Brazilian Nursing Congress, held in November 2005 in Goiânia, Goiás, in partnership with BIREME/PAHO, the Brazilian Ministry of Health through the General Coordination of Documentation and Information, the Brazilian Nursing Association, and 14 Brazilian nursing education and research institutions. It is important to highlight that this initiative also marked a milestone in the construction of the 'International Nursing VHL,' as it established a structuring platform capable of expanding both nationally and throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as to Portugal^(2,3).

Gradually, the Nursing VHL reached a level of credibility both in Brazil and in other Latin American and Ibero-American countries, expanding its scope. The history of nursing was part of the initial project as one of its areas of focus, with the idea of creating the Nursing History Portal coordinated by the Anna Nery School of Nursing. This portal was intended to promote the dissemination of scientific production in the field - texts, images, videos, events, biographies, and anything else that might interest nursing history researchers. Due to several setbacks throughout the process, the portal took longer than expected to be launched. In the meantime, in 2018, the Thematic Area on Nursing History was approved and launched, proposed by Dr. Maria Itayra Padilha, during the Latin American Colloquium on Nursing History and at the 70th Brazilian Nursing Congress, held in Curitiba, Paraná, in 2018.

The Thematic Area on Nursing History "develops studies that address the retrospective and prospective dimensions of Nursing within national and international political, cultural, educational, and social contexts. It

encompasses a set of teaching, research, and outreach activities aimed at recovering written documentation, iconographic sources, and material culture related to the institutions that guided nursing practice; understanding and analyzing the trajectory of knowledge production in Brazilian and international nursing; and examining the individuals and their experiences in the construction of nursing history⁽⁴⁾.

This launch served as a foundation and source of strength for the eventual release, in 2019, of the Nursing History Knowledge Portal/Showcase, led at the time by Dr. Maria Angélica de Almeida Peres, the project coordinator. The purpose of this portal is to respond to the movement advocating for greater visibility in the field, through oral history, life histories, entries, videos, documents, and iconographic materials⁽⁵⁾. The portal is a space dedicated to Nursing History that portrays the evolution of the nursing profession around the world. It presents knowledge on Nursing and Health within their historical-social context and trajectory through photographs, videos, filmography, written documents, biographies, rare works, lectures, articles, and academic papers⁽⁴⁾.

In March 2020, the Nursing VHL launched the Knowledge Showcase 'Nursing Work in Latin America & the Caribbean,' which was framed by the celebration of the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale and the commemoration of the International Year of the Nurse, as part of the 'Nursing Now' Campaign initiated in February 2018. Its main objective was to systematize the scientific production on nursing work in Latin America & the Caribbean, with emphasis on infometrics, inventions and technologies, education, global health, scientific communication, student leadership, and the response to COVID-19, in addition to Nursing Inventions and Technologies throughout history⁽⁶⁾.

To develop this showcase, a working group was formed composed of expert researchers in Nursing and Health History from different institutions, leaders of Research Groups/Laboratories, as well as undergraduate and graduate nursing students, with the unconditional support of the Executive Secretariat of the Nursing VHL, UFMG, and BIREME. The scope of the nursing history content has as its general objective the creation of a space that gives visibility to the historical scientific-technical literature on inventions by nurses in Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and Europe, with a focus on inventions, innovations, and technologies that contributed to nursing and health care throughout history.

In composing the content related to the inventions, innovations, and technologies created by nurses over time, the material was divided into three parts. The first includes articles, books, theses, and dissertations related to nursing inventions, innovations, and technologies. Through this strategy, approximately 508 records have been retrieved so far. This number continues to grow as new works are produced and indexed, revealing the strength of this field. The second part contains audiovisual materials already produced, such as the CD based on the book '*Enfermagem – verbo criar*', as well as new materials featuring testimonies from nurse-inventors about their creations. The third part deals exclusively with patents by nurses included in the *Instituto Nacional de Propriedade Intelectual* (INPI, National Institute of Industrial Property)⁽⁷⁾, identified through meticulous searching. However, the search was expanded to include indications of inventions listed in authors' curricula, in order to identify what could be classified as such. Many inventions were not found in the form of articles, books, theses, or dissertations; instead, they were created, patented, and often forgotten⁽⁴⁾.

It is important to highlight that the process of giving visibility to the technical-scientific literature on the inventions of nurses in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in North America, with a historical focus on innovations and technologies, has contributed to the implementation of new technologies in nursing care over time⁽⁵⁾.

In the strategies to strengthen the field of Nursing History in Brazil, the need to conduct historical research to build the profession's memory - so that it can be critically analyzed - is clearly evident. This situation represents an increasingly significant challenge. To this end, the systematic documentation of nursing history in its various facets and phases, developed across different regions of the world, may result in an exercise of self-knowledge for nurses, enabling a deeper understanding of their professional identity. In this sense, the Nursing VHL also contributes to safeguarding this informational heritage.

Historical research is essential for developing best practices across the various areas of nursing and for understanding how these practices have evolved over the years. Based on this study, it is recommended that research groups in each domain continue to question and investigate what is not yet fully clarified or supported in clinical nursing practice, advancing in accordance with global social demands and expectations.

REFERENCES

1. Rodrigues C, Blattmann U. Gestão da informação e a importância do uso de fontes de informação para geração de conhecimento. *Perspect Cienc Inf*. 2014;19(3):4-29. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1981-5344/1515>.
2. Lana FCF. Biblioteca virtual de saúde enfermagem: novas perspectivas. *Acta Paul Enferm*. 2017;30(4):1-2. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-0194201700049>.
3. Lana FCF, Ribeiro MPF, Piazza M, Abdala V. BVSEnfermagem: projeto para desenvolvimento e operacionalização. Belo Horizonte: MS; 2006 [cited 2026 Apr 15]. Available from: <https://bvsenfermeria.bvsalud.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/PROJETOmsvr.pdf>.
4. Vitrines do conhecimento: história da enfermagem. [place unknown]: Biblioteca Virtual en Salud Enfermería; [updated 2026 Apr 15; cited 2026 Apr 15]. Available from: https://bvsenfermeria.bvsalud.org/vitrinas/post_vitrines/historia-da-enfermagem/.
5. Luchesi LB, Angelis LF, Porto F, Padilha MI, Lima CCCA, Lana FCF. Biblioteca Virtual em História da Enfermagem: histórico e orientações aos pesquisadores. *Temperamentum*. 2022;18:e14057. <https://doi.org/10.58807/tmptvm20225133>.
6. Padilha MI. From Florence Nightingale to the covid-19 pandemic: the legacy we want. *Texto Contexto Enferm*. 2020;29:e20200327. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-265X-TCE-2020-0327>.
7. Instituto Nacional de Propriedade Intelectual (BR). Brasília, DF: INPI; [2026; cited 2026 Apr 24]. Available from: <https://www.gov.br/inpi/pt-br>.