

**REVIEW PAPER****School Nurses and Their Role in Emergency Health Care at Schools in the Last Thirty Years (1982-2011) in Greece: a Systematic Review Based on Greek Legislation Data****Savvas Karasavvidis, RN, PhD(c)**

Ecole Doctorale, Faculté de Biologie et de Médecine, Université de Lausanne – Suisse

**Irini Lianou, RN, BScEd, BScN**

Nurse, Sport Education Scientist, Technological Educational Institution of Larissa, Greece

**Agoritsa Koulouri, PhD(c), MSc, RMN, RN**

Head Nurse, Health Center of Salamina, Athens, Greece

**Nektaria Koutsouki, RN, MSc(c)**

Colonel Nurse, 404 Military Hospital of Larissa, Greece.

**Eleni Siamaga, RN, BScN, PhD**

Associate Professor of Nursing, Department of Nursing, Technological Educational Institution of Lamia, Greece

**Corresponding author:** Savvas Karasavvidis, RN, PhD(c) Address: Galinou 16str, 621 23, Serres, Greece, E-mail: savvaskarasavvidis@hotmail.com**Abstract**

**Background:** School Nursing embraces the pupil communities and school life in many a country across the world. This article focuses on Greek reality and analyses the Nurses' role in emergency health care-related issues from a legal perspective in the last thirty years (1982-2011). Presented are the evolution of School Nursing in Greece, Legal Provisions pertaining to it, Professional Duties, and the work of School Nurses, keeping abreast of existing legal bibliography including the latest Act, which introduces the description of duties vis-à-vis emergency health care.

**Aim:** This study links Greek School Nurses with Emergency Health Care in the School Environment. It is aimed at updating and raising awareness about further legal regulation of emergency care procedures at Schools and constructing a model to be compared to the current legislation and practice in other countries.

**Methods:** Systematic review of laws and review of articles published in the last 30 years (1982-2011) in scientific journals, academic databases included in HEAL-LING, SAGE, ELSEVIER, WILSON, SCIEDIRECT, MEDLINE, PUBMED, PsycINFO, Cochrane, EMBASE, SCOPUS and CINAHL having as search criteria and key words the terms of Greek language «Σχολική Νοσηλευτική», («School Nursing» [MeSH]), «Ειδική Αγωγή» («Special Education» [MeSH]), «Επείγουσα Φροντίδα» («Emergency Care» [MeSH]), «Νοσηλευτική Νομοθεσία» («Law and Nursing Ethics» [MeSH]), «Άτομα με Ειδικές Ανάγκες» («Children with Special Needs» [MeSH]), «Πρώτες Βοήθειες» («First Aid» [MeSH]).

**Discussion:** School Nursing in Greece is only limited to Special Education whereas health care procedures are rather unclear from a legal point of view. Further clinical training, wider roles for nurses in emergency care, and the introduction of School Nurses in all Schools and of a legal framework supporting them may be some of the future development prospects for this profession in Greece.

**Conclusion:** An important finding of this study is the conclusion that in Greece School Nurses in the last third years are solely confined to daily, scheduled care of Children with Special Needs and their Education rather than responding to emergency health needs, their role being marked by the absence of a clear legal framework.

**Key-words:** School Nursing, Special Education, Emergency Care, Law and Nursing Ethics, Children with Special Needs, First Aid

## Introduction

Nurses serve in Health Centres, Institutions for the Aged, Medical-Pedagogical Centres, Schools, Factories, Mental Homes, and other Preventive Health or Welfare Institutes as well as Institutes for People with Special Needs (Lanara, 1996).

It is a fact that the conventional model of Applied Nursing as a science is projected through the presence of Nurses in Hospital Institutions. The majority of the Greek Nursing workforce staff Public Entities belonging to the Ministry for Health and Social Solidarity; the chief goal of these entities is to provide Health Services at the Primary, First-Referral, Secondary-Referral or Last-Referral Level (Karasavvidis, 2003a). Thus, Clinical Nursing constitutes the epitome of Nursing Science and the Ministry for Health is the main employer and supervisor of Nurses in Greece.

Over the last two decades there has been a remarkable development of more Nursing Specialities in Greece. School Nurses are an Institution that falls into that latter category. They differ from Clinical Nurses in that School Nurses in Greece are funded and supervised by the Ministry for Education, Life-long Learning and Religious Affairs (Hellenic Republic, 1998).

This difference is an asset to Nursing, for School Nurses, considering the short span of their professional presence as a Scientific Speciality, have managed to command respect from the Government and, to a great extent, have had their profession and work legally secured.

A recent survey in Greece (Manthou & Ioannidou, 2002) has shown that a well-trained School Nurse is capable of detecting scoliosis among school pupils. In this way, they can help children as well as parents with treating this particular condition.

In a similar thread, a study into the School Nurses' role in preventing skin cancer (Lamprou, 2004) proves that their contribution can be crucial to organising and participating in prevention training programmes.

Also, a survey of the School Nurses' role in mainstream schools conducted in Sweden has indicated that pupils tend to visit a School Nurse because of (perceived) headaches, menstrual pain, health problems, anxiety, and the relations between the sexes (Iordanou et al., 2004).

Further research has shown that School Nurses offer systematic care and play a major role in interventions regarding not only the somatometric growth of early primary school children residing in urban areas and the prevention of childhood obesity (Kyritsi et al.,

2004), but also in matters related to raising awareness of, or dispelling, vaccine concerns originating from parents' views of factors affecting the vaccination of school children (Gesouli et al., 2003).

In Greece, however, School Nurses offer their services in Special Schools only. As pointed out, today, the official, legally provided for institution of School Nurses solely pertains to Specialist Schools, whereas for Private Schools, there is no particular legal framework (Alexandropoulou, Kalokerinou & Sourtzi, 2006).

None-the-less, one cannot but notice a slow, steady, potentially dynamic advance in the development and recognition of the School Nurses' speciality in Specialist Schools.

### School Nursing In Greece; Factors Affecting Its Development

The reasons to which an advance in School Nursing can be attributed could be summarised as follows:

1. Nursing for People with Special Needs practised in educational, residential facilities is influenced by International Human Rights Treaties. Consequently, the Government are keener to establish the welfare of health care users of this category and, hence, of Healthcare Professionals working in the aforesaid facilities.

2. Nursing for People with Special Needs comprises Clinical and Educational Work as well as Health Education. As a result, Nurses as Practitioner Teachers belong to the Special Teaching Staff, and fall into the rest of the Medical-Pedagogical Personnel, whose duties are clearly outlined.

3. Nursing in residential, and/or educational facilities for People with Special Needs is to a great extent supervised by the Ministry for Education, Life-long Learning and Religious Affairs. This works to the advantage of Nurses working in Special Schools, as this particular Ministry is deemed to be highly sensitised to, and well-organised in, the employment status of its servants. Circulars and Statutes describe the work of School Nurses and orientate their duties towards providing proper healthcare services to People with Special Needs who study in Specialist Schools.

4. Last, it can not be overlooked that School Nurses represent a tiny percentage of professionals, whose Rights plus any pertinent changes or reforms are feasible and easy to establish. In contrast, Clinical Nurses make up the majority of Greek Nurses currently employed, which acts as a hindrance to the intentions of the Government to revamp their professional framework (Karasavvidis, 2004).

## The Role of Legislation

Nursing Care as provided by School Nurses and the implementation of Nursing Procedures on their part significantly differs from the Conventional Model of Nursing Care offered by Clinical Nurses.

A distinguishing feature is that Nurses are exceptionally sensitive to symptoms displayed by People with Special Needs whereas parents and guardians of the foregoing people are directly involved in the whole process (Karasavvidis, 2003c).

This realisation further corroborates the importance School Nurses normally attach to abiding by the principles of Ethics and medical etiquette while at the same time it underscores the essential role Legislation and Professional Rights play in safeguarding Nursing Work.

After all, in the Quality Standards for Providing Nursing Care to People with Special Needs there is mention of Nursing Care being governed by the Code of Ethics and being subject to the Professional Rights reserved for Nurses (Karasavvidis, 2002).

When catering for People with Mental Retardation, Nursing Care is complex and requires co-operation and responsibility. Nursing stands on an equal footing with the rest of Sciences in its pursuit of offering integrated Healthcare Services (Karasavvidis, 2003b). Thus, Nurses harmonise their Professional Conduct with the Laws in force and their secured Professional Rights (Karasavvidis, 2003d).

## Methodology

Systematic review of law and review articles published in the last thirty years (1982-2011) in scientific journals, including academic databases such as HEAL-LING, SAGE, ELSEVIER, WILSON, SCIENCEDIRECT, MEDLINE, PUBMED, PsycINFO, Cochrane, EMBASE, SCOPUS and CINAHL, having as search criteria and key words the terms of the Greek language «Σχολική Νοσηλευτική», («School Nursing» [MeSH]), «Ειδική Αγωγή» («Special Education» [MeSH]), «Επείγουσα Φροντίδα» («Emergency Care» [MeSH]), «Νοσηλευτική Νομοθεσία» («Law and Nursing Ethics» [MeSH]), «Άτομα με Ειδικές Ανάγκες» («Children with Special Needs» [MeSH]), «Πρώτες Βοήθειες» («First Aid» [MeSH]).

Moreover, we have drawn relevant data from legal documents, books on law, proceedings and abstracts from conferences and symposia, handbooks, educational and academic programmes and/or papers. In parallel, we have

studied in depth any references or pertinent articles we have found.

Additionally, we have set criteria for including or rejecting individual researches to be assessed.

Inclusion criteria applied were the following:

- Articles should refer to School Nursing in Greece.

- Legislation should be pertinent to Greek Nursing.

- Legislation and Official Documents, Circulars and Ministerial Decisions should have been officially issued and ratified by the Hellenic Republic Ministries involved.

With regard to rejection, the ensuing criteria prevailed:

- A Date Restriction (1982 onwards), for as of that year Special Education has begun to be actually administered in Greece. Earlier procedures, occurred as they may have, were not legally enacted.

- The Language Restriction to the Greek Language owing to our focus on Greek School Nursing.

- Anything concerning Greek Nursing without focusing on School Nursing.

- Anything related to Emergency Care and First Aid, but not primarily dealing with the School Population.

- Any reference to/in Legal Documentation, Case Law, Bills or Amendments, the Proceedings of the Hellenic Parliament or any other Legal Instrument not related to the subject of this Review.

## Results

Based on the foregoing Methodology, we have retrieved the data below, which concern School Nursing practised in Greece and link the role of School Nurses to Emergency Care:

### 1. Presidential Decree 605/1982

Presidential Decree 605/1982 was the forerunner of the beneficial Act that ensued; in fact, this decree sparked subsequent legislation, as it proved inadequate for the demanding field of Special Education.

This Presidential Decree exclusively focused on the educational process for People with Special Needs. It did not provide for specialities of the Special Teaching Staff, hence it made no mention of School Nurses, either. These shortcomings were later addressed by Act 1566/1985 (Hellenic Republic & Hellenic Parliament, 1982).

## 2. Act 1566/1985

In Greece, Nursing for People with Special Needs was awarded legal status by virtue of Act 1566/1985. Nurses have since been entitled to access Special Needs People Education facilities, on the merit of their Scientific credentials (Karasavvidis, 2002).

More specifically, through the Hellenic Republic Gazette issue No A 167/30.09.1985, there came into force the "Structure and Function of Primary and Secondary Education and other provisions" Act No 1566/1985, Chapter X of which is entitled "Special Education" and—inter alia—refers to School Nurses in detail.

So, as stipulated in clause 35 of this Act, which concerns Personnel staffing Special Schools, Special Staff includes the Speciality of the so-styled Higher Education Graduates No 2 - Consultants, their formal academic credentials required being a Degree in Nursing or Early Childhood Care, obtained from a Tertiary Education Institute based in Greece or overseas (Hellenic Republic & Hellenic Parliament, 1985).

In effect, this particular Act has been the Nurses' ticket for entry into schools, their distinct speciality being School Nursing.

## 3. Circular 247/1987

Despite the implementation of Act 1566/1985, there arose a plethora of problems one could pinpoint in the field of duties and responsibilities allocated for each Speciality, which Act 1566/1985 did not provide for. Stemming from this, the then Ministry for National Education and Religious Affairs issued the Emergency priority level-assigned Circular C6/247/06.05.1987 on "Duties of Special Education Personnel falling into New Specialities".

The paragraph most important for School Nursing is the fifth one, entitled "Duties allocated for each Speciality", where the particular duties per Speciality of those serving in Special Schools are outlined.

Thus, Special Education Consultants are charged with the responsibilities below:

1. A Special Education Consultant shall regularly collaborate with Form Tutors, especially those who have pupils with special educational needs (SEN) or relatively large classes, and shall help, on an individual or small group basis, with implementing a special educational programme under the guidance of the aforesaid Form Tutors.
2. He or she shall provide first aid to schoolchildren, when required. He / She is also responsible for monitoring and ensuring their healthy living conditions while at school, plus adequate sanitation, hygiene and cleanness in general.
3. An in-class regular provision of services shall not be limited to one year or class; rather it shall

encompass all classes where prioritised needs may arise, the Consultant being responsible along with teachers for keeping and maintaining all and every aids, pieces of equipment or material as a whole.

4. A Consultant shall also assist with the pupils' transport to and from vehicles, when applicable, and with preparing the children for leaving school, along with other members of the school staff.

5. Consultants are expected to co-operate with all school staff, children and parents in an amiable manner, and participate in all scientific, educational, cultural or entertaining school activities (Hellenic Republic & Ministry for National Education and Religious Affairs, 1987).

All in all, for the first time, section 2 of this paragraph has introduced the provision of emergency care in a School Environment by School Nurses.

## 4. Presidential Decree 351/1989

Quite pioneering for its time, Presidential Decree 351, concerning a detailed description of Registered Nurses, stipulates that Nurses can implement accident prevention programmes or administer first aid, with or without a doctor's supervision.

More specifically, section 2.1.8 focuses on accident prevention in nursing care facilities; therefore, it covers the School Environment, too, as the latter is a place where nursing services are provided by a School Nurse. Added to that, sections 2.2., 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 explicitly state in a detailed fashion that the Nurses' duties and professional rights include—among others—"the implementation of an emergency action protocol wherever adverse incidents are foreseeable" and "administering first aid".

Granted that the School Environment of a Special School is susceptible to incidents calling for emergency care, especially "foreseeable" ones, as designated in the Presidential Decree in question, School Nurses are legally eligible for providing emergency care services in their workplaces<sup>18</sup>.

Understandably, this Presidential Decree refers to Technological Education Institutes (TEI) Graduates only. Likewise, when Act 2817/2000 subsequently came into force, School Nurses continued to be TEI Graduates only although nowadays there are two University Departments of Nursing in Athens and Sparta (Hellenic Republic & Hellenic Parliament, 1989)

## 5. Act 2817/2000

After prolonged stagnation in the field of Special Education and as International Treaties kept changing and becoming more and more flexible in order to meet the challenges posed by the new realities in modern societies and to achieve the integration of People with Special Needs into them, the Hellenic

Government has been slow to re-adjust its policies and keep abreast of Global Developments.

Fortunately, in May 2000, Act 2817 was a progressive step towards upgrading Special Education Services, naturally affecting Nurses, too.

In particular, by virtue of the Hellenic Republic Gazette issue No A 78 / 14.03.2003, there came into force the "Education of People with Special Needs and other provisions" Act No 2817.

Clause 3 epitomises the importance of this Act for the Nursing Community. New, innovative changes are introduced, as regards Nurses serving in Special Education positions:

**1.** The Professional Title of the, until then, Higher Education Graduates No 2 - Consultants Teaching Staff changes into Technological Education Graduates No 2 - School Nurses.

**2.** The specific formal qualification required for appointment is a Degree in either Nursing or Early Childhood Care or a Health Visitor's Degree, obtained from a Tertiary Education Institute that is based in Greece or an equivalent to any of the three foregoing degrees, obtained overseas.

**3.** The work of School Nurses is described as follows: "School Nurses' work involves hygiene and **health care** for children studying in Specialist Schools". [Emphasis added.]

**4.** Technological Education Graduates No 2 - School Nurses' Speciality is renamed University Education Graduates No 25 - School Nurses.

**5.** Another supplementary prerequisite for appointment is added, viz. a Degree in Pedagogical Studies or a Degree from the Institute formerly known as School of Vocational and Technological Education for Practitioner Teachers (ΣΕΛΕΤΕ).

**6.** Also, in accordance with Act 2817, all allowances and benefits concerning School Nurses (e.g. the Special Working Conditions Allowance) remain in force (Hellenic Republic & Hellenic Parliament, 2000).

In effect, this new Act continues to view as valid the relevant pre-existing legislation and the professional rights accorded to School Nurses with reference to implementing emergency care protocols, as emergency care may well be regarded as a form of "health care".

#### **6. Presidential Decree 216/2001**

In 2001, the Code of Nursing Ethics was published. The rationale for its creation focuses on an endeavour to outline the Work of Nurses in Greece. Within this Code one comes across several important details especially concerning aspects of bioethics, care and dilemma management. Clauses 7 and 23, in particular, include stipulations with ramifications for

emergency care.

For instance, clause 7 mentions that "a Nurse is expected to show unconditional respect for the value of human life and take any step for rescuing or preserving it"; similarly, in clause 23, which details the duties of Community Nurses, videlicet the category comprising School Nurses, too, it is expressly stated that "a Nurse's intrinsic duty is to offer diagnostic, therapeutic and nursing support services" (Hellenic Republic & Hellenic Parliament, 2001). This final provision is in harmony with the nursing procedures applied in emergency care in a School Environment.

#### **7. Hellenic Nurses' Association (HNA) Document 175/2002**

The Hellenic Nurses' Association of have drawn up a document which they consigned to the Ministry for Education, focusing on staffing Facilities/Bodies that provide care for People with Special Needs, describing the work practised by School Nurses.

This has been an original, innovative move and actually constitutes the first official recognition of, and support for, School Nursing, as required by International Standards.

A verbatim extract of it ensues:

"Registered Nurses, by virtue of the knowledge they have obtained during their Undergraduate Studies, in their capacity as 'School Nurses', are capable of providing care services to the School Population, such as:

**1.** Assessment and promotion of the health status of the school population:

- Thorough examination and assessment of every child's health.

- Treating and taking care of children in case of a sudden illness, e.g. an epileptic seizure or an injury having resulted from an accident.

**2.** Amelioration of the physical and social environment in which the school population lives and works, especially when there is a need for a study into potential hazards stemming from the physical environment itself, infectious diseases, or the psychosocial environment.

**3.** Planned Health Education:

- Encouraging parents and school staff to participate in health-related activities.

**4.** Counselling for parents, teachers, pupils" (Hellenic Nurses' Association, 2002).

The importance of this step lies in that the scientific body monitoring the profession officially underlines the range of duties allocated to School Nurses, which includes treating emergency care incidents, such as sudden illness, accidents or epileptic seizures.

### 8. Decision 27922/2007

In this Decision, entitled "Defining duties and responsibilities peculiar to: i) the teaching staff serving in Special Schools in primary and secondary education (specialist schools, inclusion classes) as well as special education programmes (scaffolding and home schooling), ii) the special teaching staff and the special support staff serving in Special Schools in primary and secondary education", the Ministry for Education essentially outlines the work of School Nurses, so placing Health Education and Emergency Care as specific scientific duties of this category of professionals. To be precise, in the General Principles of Ethics regarding the staff serving in special education, it is stipulated that: "Staff serving in special education school facilities ought to:

1. act within the framework of international declarations of rights for the disabled and in accordance with the ethical principles pertaining to their scientific, professional property,
2. take part in, and promote, professional activities aimed at upgrading educational services for the disabled and improving their living standards and those of their families,
3. be sensitive to the religion, culture, language, gender, disability and socio-economic status of the disabled, assuming responsibility for ensuring personal data privacy,
4. collaborate with the staff of mainstream schools and official bodies and members of communities with a view to promoting the integration of the disabled at the school, social and professional level,
5. may participate in research projects" (Hellenic Republic & Hellenic Parliament, 2007).

In the same Decision, in Chapter B, "General Duties of Special Teaching Staff" (which includes School Nurses) are described as follows:

«1. Special Teaching Staff members participate in activities and events involving the school where they serve, on a par with the rest of the teaching staff. They are not exempt from special duties or tasks the school headmaster may assign to them.

2. Special staff may have to exercise their duties in adjacent or neighbouring Special Schools in case there are no equivalent speciality personnel in these schools and on condition that the relevant needs in the schools where they serve are fully catered for. Such potential obligation to exercise their duties in more than one school shall be decided by the Regional Education Manager upon recommendation by the Regional Service Council for Special Teaching Staff, following reasoned opinions submitted by the Special Education and pertinent speciality School Advisers.

3. Special staff shall co-operate with teachers and the rest of the school staff as well as parents, so as to

ensure smooth operation of a school and further development of educational work.

4. They shall exercise their duties in parallel with the teaching work practised by educationists, in specially allocated rooms or classrooms, when required, at scheduled times, in co-operation with teachers in charge of classes, but shall under no circumstances substitute for the latter.

5. They shall regularly update pupils' records and shall exchange views with the rest of the teaching and special teaching school staff in arranged sessions, always adhering to the provisions of clause 16, Act 1143/1981 on professional privacy.

6. They shall offer their services abiding by the code of ethics pertaining to their speciality and in accordance with existing legislation.

7. In the beginning of each school year, they shall submit, through the school headmaster, a schedule of activities in three copies to the special education school adviser, informing him or her of any essential modifications to it that might be brought about during its implementation.

8. They are expected to facilitate any apprenticeships of undergraduate or postgraduate students of the same speciality as they, whom a school might receive in concert with the headmaster and the staff of the same speciality, upon approval by the Ministry for Education.

9. Advocacy and support projects for parents on an individual or small group basis form part of the special teaching staff's timetable.

10. The special staff's participation in all in-school or out-of-school events is compulsory" (Hellenic Republic & Hellenic Parliament, 2007).

The most important section of this decision, which specifically refers to School Nurses and details their professional, scientific, educational, and interdisciplinary duties and rights, is the following paragraph of the Decision in question. It stipulates that School Nurses:

«1. raise awareness among pupils about personal hygiene rules and hazard protection. Their main work is health education and health promotion, aiming for keeping and improving health standards of the school population.

2. are actively involved in inspecting and monitoring the hygiene conditions of the school environment (the classrooms, shared spaces, canteen, cafeteria) and suggest taking necessary measures for the protecting the pupils' health.

3. administer first aid to schoolchildren and treat sudden illnesses, diseases or accidents that occur during breaks or school activities.

4. are in charge of nursing work for pupils (pharmaceutical treatment and the like) in co-

operation with the school doctor or along with each pupil's personal physician, having obtained parental consent.

5. are responsible for notifying families of accidents, should they occur, for escorting a pupil to a medical institution, and remaining with them until a parent or guardian of the child who has been transported to hospital arrives.

6. raise awareness, inform and present specialised treatments to the special teaching staff as regards hygiene matters, always collaborating with the entire teaching staff and health services on issues falling within their competence.

7. work on an individual or small group basis in the health education office or laboratory if such a facility is available at school" (Hellenic Republic & Hellenic Parliament, 2007).

This Ministerial Decision is a landmark in the history of University Education Graduates No 25 - School Nurses, for it provides for the existence of a Health Education Laboratory, whose operation is to be supervised by School Nurses. At the same time, the notion of Emergency Care assumes a holistic dimension, whereas the School Nurses' work is linked to a social role, too. Remaining at Hospital after escorting a child and safely delivering him or her to their parents is a truly new dimension added to the notion of emergency care nursing.

As school reality can now be seen through this holistic prism, it is evident that School Nurses are actively involved in, as well as legally and professionally supported in, providing emergency care in the school environment (sudden illnesses, accidents, ailments).

### **9. Act 3699/2008**

In October 2008, there came into force a new Act on the Structures of the Ministry for Education, entitled "Special Education and Education of people with a disability or special educational needs". As far as School Nurses are concerned, their professional rights remain intact and their legal status is sustained once more (Hellenic Republic & Hellenic Parliament, 2008).

### **Conclusions**

Hellenic Legislation has included School Nurses and their role in planning and implementing Health Education Programmes for almost three decades, since the first Laws on Special Education were enacted. One notices that the first references to administering First Aid are nearly simultaneous.

There is no mention whatsoever of the Emergency Care in Mainstream-Conventional Schools, as the school population there is far larger, which entails much greater health problems.

The decision of the Hellenic Government to introduce Health Education programmes and First Aid seminars into Special Education is characterised by generalities. There is no detailed reference as to the subject matter and objectives of Emergency Care; there is no hinting at supervising, organising, planning, co-ordinating, funding, implementing or assessing Health Education or First Aid Programmes, either.

There is also an arguably paradoxical spectacle currently provided by School Nurses as an institution. On the one hand, School Nurses seem to pursue the creation of a link between their professional rights and teaching school classes as fully-fledged teachers. On the other hand, there has been no claim or protest lodged on their part over the lack of support for Health Education and the domain of First Aid.

Added to that, it is worth noting that connecting School Nurses with administering First Aid is cause for concern that their scientific-educational work will be associated with clinical interventions, which they likely wish to eschew because of the existing vagueness as to their role in Education, despite the fact incidents calling for emergency care are ubiquitous.

Nevertheless, it is now possible to follow the evolutionary course of Nursing Science. In the '80s, General Act No 1566/1985 was a hesitant, yet radical step, for it established the participation of School Nurses as assistants in medical practice and as First Aid providers. Their very professional title ("Consultants") hints at the fact that the then social, political and cultural framework was not favourable enough for designating School Nurses to implement Health Programmes.

This development started to become significant as School Nurses began to be officially recognised. Their prestigious status, on a par with the rest of the teaching staff, is reflected in the ensuing legislation and circulars, stipulating that First Aid and Health Education fall into their competence.

Nursing work and the nursing procedures that are implemented in a School Environment cannot be described or analysed in specialised clinical protocols. Further, it is manifest that Emergency Care and First Aid provision, notwithstanding being a daily reality for People with Special Needs and their carers, still pose a complex challenge for School Nurses because the implementation of emergency care protocols draws upon synthetic models of nursing care, especially a mixture of Clinical, Community, Paediatric, Neurological and Emergency Care, also touching upon Prevention and Health Education.

Last, one has grounds for optimism, as there have been some slow, gradual steps taken. Even through a hard course, which has been ridden

with all too frequent setbacks and constant appropriation of Nurse Scientists' professional rights by unrelated specialities, apparently, there develops a trend towards placing School Nurses at the frontline of implementing, planning and teaching Health Education and emergency care programmes.

## Discussion

School Nurses as an Institution are surely a fact. This development is beneficial to Greek Nursing as it advances, and causes positive feelings among Greek Nurses. Gathering the above, one need not emphasise the following points:

School Nurses in Greece are hired in a way different from the one applied in the appointment of Clinical Nurses. It is advisable that qualifications required for the former category's appointment should include proof of proficiency in Clinical Skills, Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) or Clinical Experience. School Nursing, as an Applied Nursing Speciality is to be found in Greece only in the context of People with Special Needs and facilities like Special or Specialist Schools.

The Ministry for Education, Life-long Learning and Religious Affairs, as the official employer and supervisor of School Nurses, recognises their work and advocates School Nursing by securing their Professional Duties.

It is impressive that from both a clerical and a remuneration point of view, School Nurses have come to be treated identically to Teachers; although School Nurses are Technological Education graduates, they are placed among University Education graduates, even when it comes to their professional title (University Education Graduates No 25 – School Nurses), and enjoy equal status and benefits.

However, the points below are worth underlining:

School Nursing is negatively affected and somewhat downgraded because, for School Nurses positions, those who hold a Degree in Early Childhood Care or a Health Visitor's Degree may be considered for appointment on an equal basis with Nurses. The subject area of Nursing enables School Nurses to implement Nursing Procedures that they have been taught, whereas this feature is only partly present in, or entirely absent from, the Undergraduate Studies of the other two Scientific Specialities.

School Nursing should be an Applied Nursing Speciality in Primary and Secondary Education in Mainstream Schools as well as Kindergartens and Nursery Schools.

This proposal has been put forward by the Hellenic National Association of Nurses, too.

Finally, School Nursing ought to be placed among Specialities leading to a Master's and a Doctor's Degree, which is currently missing from Greece. In that way, the Scientific Advancement of School Nursing in Greece will become possible.

School Nursing is being consolidated in Greece. Plenty of new Researchers and Students are active in this field. School Nurses have recently presented (Nikoloudakis & Karapidou, 2003) the Scientific Nursing Community with the first Electronic Nursing Guide to Life for People with Special Needs. It is a CD – ROM that is intended for motivating individuals to reach the maximum level of self-care possible, in an attempt to make them independent and unleash personal creativity in their lives.

Despite the twenty-year-long existence of Special Education School Nurses, there are still several problems hindering School Nursing consolidation. Hence, it is imperative that Nurses act with a strategy and claim appropriate roles in the educational system in both the public and the private sectors (Alexandropoulou, Kalokerinou & Sourtzi, 2006).

New challenges in the domain of Primary Healthcare for People with Special Needs prove the multi-faceted role Nursing is expected to play, as support for People with Special Needs is the first crucial step for independence, employment, social inclusion and – above all – respect and acceptance of their difference by the society (Choupi & Vardaki, 2003).

Nursing and its representatives constitute a vital part of the society and the cultural framework in place, through which they gain esteem, prestige, and their very personal existence (Karasavvidis, 2003e).

An instrumental factor in the evolutionary course of School Nurses in connection with Emergency Care is the existence of a legal shield around Nurses in general and School Nurses in particular. This fact is a flexibility-inducing advantage for School Nurses, which creates a sense of safety among both parents and educationists working with them.

It should not be overlooked that in Special Education facilities, where School Nurses are formally active, there are normally no Doctors or other Health Scientists with Clinical Skills in providing First Aid.

School Nursing in Greece primarily deals with People with Special Needs. The quintessence and main tool of School Nurses' work is respect for Difference. This is a value that School Nurses could impart to the entire School Population, on condition that the Institution of School Nurses spreads in Kindergartens, Primary and Secondary Schools.



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