

Celebrating Bahrain's Remarkable Nursing Legacy: The Story of Bahraini Nursing Power Advancing Health and Society

A team of venerable Bahraini nurse leaders and authors* proudly announce their landmark book, ***A Century of Nursing in Bahrain 1900-2020: A Journey of Service and Empowerment***, presenting a real-life example of “*Nursing Power to Change the World*”.

The book commemorates more than 100 years of development and progress within the nursing and midwifery professions, which saw life expectancy in Bahrain go from 39.7 in 1950 (earliest records), to 81.58 in 2024, one of the highest in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.

This milestone publication chronicles the professionalisation and indigenisation of nursing education, practice and impact, from modest beginnings in lay-health roles to the globally respected and vital component of the Bahrain national health care system.

Among the many stories include those of:

- ✓ Early 20th century health dispensaries and ‘mobile’ health services
- ✓ Traditional health healers and birth attendants
- ✓ Fatima Al-Zayani, the first formally educated indigenous Bahraini nurse
- ✓ The 1981 nursing education transformation from a medical to a nursing curriculum, emphasizing preventive, rehabilitative, and health promoting care.
- ✓ WHO designation of the College of Health Sciences (CHS) Nursing Division as the first Collaborating Centre for Nursing & Midwifery Development in the EMRO
- ✓ Future Roadmap: vision and actionable insights to guide the future of nursing, midwifery and health care for all in Bahrain.

Impact of Bahraini nurse-midwife education on infant and maternal mortality

To *create* an indigenous Bahraini nursing cadre and thus nationalize the Bahrain health care system, the Bahrain CHS was established in 1976. At the same time, the one-year midwifery post-basic nursing program started with the full support of WHO. The number of nursing program graduates steadily increased, reaching a total of 3,214 students by 2006.

- ✓ In those 30 years, Bahrain’s **infant mortality ratio** declined from 33 / 1000 live births in 1978, to 8.7 / 1000 live births in 2006. By 2023 it dropped to 5.1 / 1000.
- ✓ IAs well. **Bahrain maternal mortality ratio** fell from 40 per 100,000 live births to 21 per 100,000. By 2020 it went to 17 / 100,000, lower than the regional average.

Mrs. Batool Al Muhandis stressed that, “The book used a historical research methodology consolidating oral histories, interviews, archival records, and personal accounts into an easily accessible narrative on nursing education, practice, research, innovation and regulation.” While Dr. Mouza Suwaihelh shared her views that the book is “for the nurses who came before us, the ones beside us, and the ones yet to come.”

“The book reminds us that the roots of care run deep - like Bahrain’s Tree of Life -and that nursing, in all its forms, remains founded in hope, strength, and human dignity,” said Dr. Naeema Al Qasseer

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Bahrain’s **Tree of Life**-Shajarat-al-Hayat, is a more than 400 year-old, Prosopis cineraria, sitting on a hill in a barren area of the Arabian Desert. It is not certain how the tree survives, as Bahrain has very little rain throughout the year. Its roots are 50 meters deep, which may be enough to reach water. Others believe the tree has learned to extract moisture from grains of sand. The yellow resin is used to make candles, aromatics and gum; the beans it produces are processed into meal and jam^[2].

With its abundant leaves and open arms, the Bahraini Tree of Life represents nursing care, providing shelter and protection for all. Like nursing, it is an example of resiliency, resourcefulness and survival, radiating positive energy to whoever rests under its caring arms.

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