

A Distant Dream: The Formation and Evolution of Public Health Nursing in Korea, 1945–1979*

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After liberating Korea from the Japanese in 1945, the U.S. military government criticized the nursing activities developed during the colonial period and began to promote public health. Public health nursing was new and exciting for Korean nurses, accustomed to a role as doctor's assistants rather than professionals in their own right. The establishment and expansion of public health centers provided an opportunity for public health nursing to grow, and public health nurses became involved in family planning and preventive and curative tuberculosis programs. Yet they also faced challenges. Due to insufficient government financial support, they had to generate revenue for public health centers independently. Their activities were also restricted to public health centers, without expanding into the wider community. Despite aiming at decolonization, then, public health nursing displayed significant continuity with state-centric colonial medicine. It was only with the introduction of the new concept of community health nursing that a more bottom-up approach emerged.

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