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Original research article

The role of paediatric nurse in home visiting of newborns and infants in the past – literary survey



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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the problems of home visiting service for newborns, infants and mothers in the territory of Czechoslovakia during the period from 1949 to 1989. At that time the complex child care requirements was carried out through the district system. In-depth analysis of documents and articles from professional journals were used as the method of obtaining and processing the data. The articles were researched up via a research service in the National Medical Library in Prague. Criteria for the selection included the period 1949–1989 and the key words used were – nurse, newborn, infant, care and nursing. One hundred and thirty-four documents were found in total and after a thorough analysis 14 articles were included in the literary survey. The goal of this literary survey was to map out the care of newborns and infants in the territory of former Czechoslovakia from 1949 to 1989. The results of the survey showed that the care of newborns and infants was ensured via the district system which included home visiting in families, counselling for infants and toddlers and the district medical care. It is also obvious that the introduction of district health care in the past was a comprehensive solution to the problems of health care of the children. This data provides a rational basis for the idea that community care of an infant plays an important role in the health care system also in the present when we miss home visiting service of a paediatric nurse of newborns and infants which is absolutely common practice in developed European countries.

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Introduction

Paediatric nursing is an applied field of nursing focused on providing nursing care to an individual from the birth till the person has completed their 18th year of life. From the

historical view, paediatrics gradually separated from internal medicine of adults. It became a separate branch only in the 19th century in order to systematically monitor child development and to apply the acquired knowledge in the nursing care and education. First Children's Hospital was founded in Paris in 1802, subsequently in 1842 in Prague and in

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1846 in Brno. Professor Schlossman expressed a revolutionary idea in Dresden. He said that children cannot be considered miniature of adults, but there is a big difference between providing health care to adults and to children [1]. The first nursing school for paediatric nurses was founded in 1922 in the hospital Protection of mothers and children in Prague-Krč. Subsequently, paediatric nursing has undergone rapid development and gradually also the system of paediatric nurses' education has improved. After the World War II, there were significant changes in nursing education. In 1948 the School Act No. 95 of the unitary school came into force. It also brought changes in education which focused on child care and was put into effect at social and health care colleges. At the same time the name of a nurse to infants and children was changed to a paediatric nurse [2]. Since 1951, paediatric nurses studied at four-year secondary school with final graduation exam with written, oral and practical sections. Government Regulation No. 7 from 1951 ½ 4 specified the activities and competencies of a paediatric nurse. These competencies were assigned rather generally – a paediatric nurse works in all fields of protection, medical and health care for children up to 15 years, but especially for infants and toddlers. The paediatric nurse continuously monitors the health state of a child and the impact of the environment on its development when visiting the families or schools [3]. The decree on health care workers No. 77 from 1981 brought other changes regarding education. In order to promote the substitutability of general, women's and children's nurses, these fields were standardized through implementation of a common training base [4].

The 50s of the 20th century are regarded in the history of the Czechoslovakia as the period of development of primary prevention through health care outreach services and home visits. That goes especially for gynaecological-obstetric and paediatric nursing. The fieldwork of health facilities of child care was regulated by the Ministry of Health dated 30 March 1952. Taking care of newborns, infants and mothers was an important strategy to combat the high infant mortality rate at

that time. In connection with the introduction of an outreach care of a mother and child, and with scientific progress in the field of medicine a serious decline in infant mortality was achieved [5]. It can be seen in the graphic design of the Czech Statistical Office (Chart 1).

Visiting services of a paediatric nurse in the homes with newborns and infants particularly within rural districts was considered an effective solution to access to health and nursing care. At the same time, it should actively contribute to reducing mortality and morbidity in children due to inadequate nutrition, hygiene and high incidence of infectious diseases. Until 1973, home visit for mothers and infants were performed by a woman's nurse and a paediatric nurse together. This was changed by a decree of the Ministry of Health from 27 April 1973, which stated that home visits for mothers and infants would be considered a priority and performed by a paediatric nurse. Woman's nurse should perform the visit only in case if a paediatric nurse cannot handle this task in time. Paediatric nurse should educate a mother regarding the active care of a child and supervise active monitoring through the home visits [7].

The goal of this article is to present trace evidence how home visit service and care of newborns and infants were provided in the territory of former Czechoslovakia from 1949 to 1989. In addition, to compare acquired information with the current model of care for newborns and infants in the Czech Republic and abroad, particularly in Scandinavia which is considered an economically developed country and where a functional system of community care of newborns, infants and mothers has been created.

Materials and methods

Information sources (1949–1989) were searched via online research service of the National medical library in Prague. As the selection criteria were used the following key words –

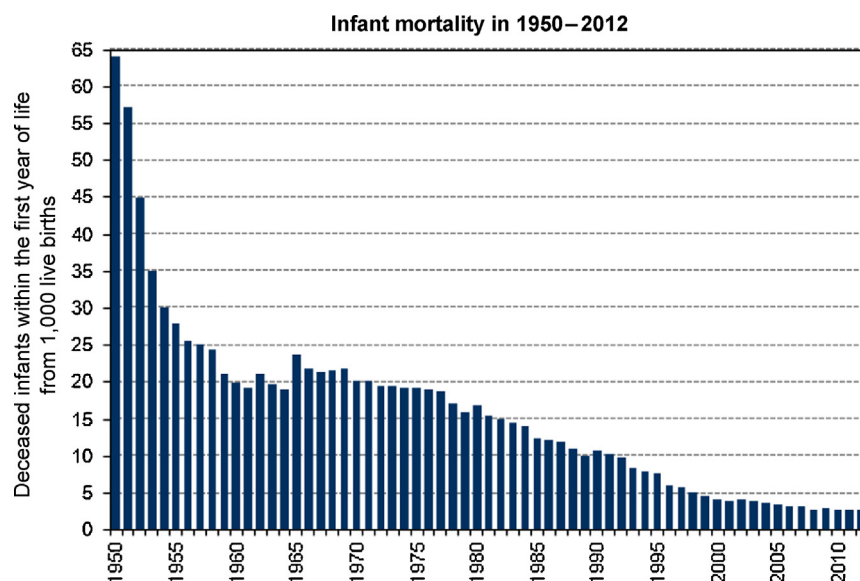


Chart 1 – Infant mortality in 1950–2012.

Source: Czech Statistical Office [6].

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