

# Sex Discrimination at Nursing in Turkey: To be a Male Nurse

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## Introduction

Nursing is a professional health care services occupation, in which the professional knowledge and behaviour required to apply the health care in an adequate and qualified manner to the individual, family and community will be provided in protective and curative health services [1]. Sex discrimination by health staff, colleagues and patients is an important problem in during the professionalization of nursing. Male nurses are exposed discrimination and inequalities arise between colleagues in the worldwide [2-4]. The nursing profession has been perceived as a female profession from the time it first emerged in all over the world until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [2,3]. But the fact that men now function as members of the nursing profession has acquired a different vision for the profession [2,3]. For the first time in Turkey, males have taken steps to nursing professions by closing of health officer departments and enrolment of male students. At the university level, health officer education started with associate degree programs in 1994 and switched to undergraduate education in Health Officer Ship in 1996. As of 1999, the department known as a health officer was closed with acceptance of male students to nursing departments. Despite the fact that there was no law regarding the non-acceptance of male students in the nursing departments, men were not preferred because of their inability to work as nurses and the common perception of nursing profession as a female occupation [4]. The reason for males not being able to work as nurses is the expression in the first paragraph of Article 3 of the Nursing Law from 1954, which is still in force, "Nobody else can do the act of nursing in Turkey except Turkish women who have won the title of nurse within the provisions of this law" [5]. As of 2007, with the changing of the nursing law, men began to be accepted into the nursing profession.

In the world, there had been problems in accepting of male nurses in different societies and male nurses have had to cope with these problems in education and working life [6]. Research suggests that men choose nursing as a career to provide care and help others, but they are questioned regarding their sexual orientation, and are considered in appropriate for bed-side nursing [7]. Care is a core nursing principle, and nurses of both genders show care towards their patients differently. The evaluation of acceptance of male

nurses in Turkey should be evaluated separately in terms of female nurses and patients, who are their colleagues.

The fact that majority of female nurses are nowadays causing the continuing of their authorities in the nurse career and although female nurses are the majority as administrators. However the preference of male nurses in certain nursing practices (such as placement of a probe in male patients) has relieved their female colleagues. For this reason, male nurses were accepted in a shorter period in terms of colleagues and took their place in the nursing profession. In addition, today at least one third of the departments in the undergraduate level of nursing education are men, and the number of men who prefer nursing is increasing day by day. Initially, male nurses were prejudiced against in our country; however, acceptance process was short due to their positive contribution to the profession.

In World and Turkey, it is known that male nurses are currently being discriminated by patients due to their gender [8]. Female patients who do not want male nurses to give injections and male nurses not being preferred in women's obstetric services in many health institutions of Turkey and even male nurse candidates can be rejected by the patients while they are working in women's maternity services during their education [9]. For Turkey, a patriarchal and Muslim society, it takes time for male nurses to work in each area without being subjected to gender discrimination. In a study conducted, 38.3% of those who participated in the study reported that they preferred female nurses instead of male nurses [4]. In another study, it was reported that 40.4% of the women who were served by male nurses and stated that they were shy [10].

Because nursing is associated with feminine characteristics, it is mainly considered a woman's profession [11]. Despite the increasing number of men choosing nursing as a profession, they often face discrimination in this pre dominantly female profession [12]. Nursing is still a female-dominated profession, and this creates problems for men who are interested in this profession.

As a result, measures such as informing about the male nurse's acceptance socially, self-confidently training the male and female nurses during the education phase, giving more places to male

nurses in the administration and in some fields can be considered as precautions that can eliminate the gender discrimination made by the society in the nursing profession.

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