

Exploring the History of Registered Psychiatric Nursing in British Columbia

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This research study is a historically-based examination of the evolution of psychiatric nurse education in British Columbia (BC), Canada, from 1913 to 2018. While Registered Psychiatric Nursing (RPN) is a common professional designation in Western Canada (Alberta, BC, Manitoba and Saskatchewan) there is no common standard of education and curriculum equivalent to that of Registered Nurses (RN). In Eastern Canada (provinces east of Manitoba) mental health nursing is done by RNs. In Western Canada mental health nursing includes RNs and RPNs. Registered psychiatric nursing is a distinct profession with its own legislation and code of ethics. In BC, the amalgamation of the BC Nurses (RN, RPN and licensed practical nurses) in 2018 to one regulator resulted in common standards of practice connect all three nursing groups while retraining unique scopes of practice and professional standards. The following research questions will explore how social, political and economic factors influenced the place and role psychiatric nurses:

- What socio-political factors of the early 20th century led to the formation of Essondale Hospital and the BC Psychiatric Nursing School?
- What role did the BC Psychiatric Nursing School play in the development of psychiatric nursing?
- How did provincial legislation influence the formation, education, and professionalization of RPNs in BC?
- What were the social, political and economic influences on the development of mental health nursing curriculum in relation to general nursing programs in BC?
- What role did RPNs play in the closing of Riverview Hospital, and the de-institutionalization movement in BC?
- What was the role of Psychiatric Nursing in BC at the end of institutionalization?

Exploring the history of RPN education in BC with a focus on Essondale (later Riverview) Hospital will illuminate how and if the professional distinction should persist to inform a Canadian conceptualization of psychiatric nursing.