

THE EDUCATION OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL IN SLOVAKIA DURING THE TIME OF THE FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC

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Abstract

The contribution focuses on the education of medical personnel in Slovakia during the time of the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1939). It took various forms. Physicians underwent their highest level of medical education at the Faculty of Medicine at the newly founded Johann Amos Comenius University in Bratislava (1919). Other medical staff were initially trained through short-term courses organised by the religious orders who focused on care for the sick and immobile, and the Czechoslovak Red Cross. Later, church nursing schools were founded by the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross (Bratislava) and the nuns of the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul (Košice). Our text also briefly touches on the separate courses organised for midwives. The authors drew from archival sources, the press and relevant specialist literature of the period.

Keywords: *healthcare, medical education, church nursing educational system, midwives*

GENERAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The establishment of the independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 created new conditions to allow the resolution of issues in the healthcare system. As early as the 11th November 1918, Act No. 2/1918 Coll. established the Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education, which split off the Ministry of Healthcare from the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry had four departments: the Department of Healthcare Administration, the Anti-Epidemic Department, the Healthcare-Social Department and the Department of Hygiene. The Minister was advised by the State Healthcare Council which was made up of leading specialists from the whole of Czechoslovakia, appointed by the Minister of Healthcare. The role of the State Healthcare Council was to present proposals aimed at an improvement in healthcare and the evaluation of statistical information. Apart from the State Healthcare Council, there were several other advisory bodies at the Ministry, who were responsible for exceptional situations.

The healthcare system in Slovakia was managed by the Section for Healthcare at the Office of the Minister for the Administration of Slovakia. The Section was headed by Dr. Ivan Hálek. In March 1921, the sections in Slovakia were abolished and their activities were taken over by agencies. Therefore, the all-state Ministry of Public Health and Physical Education in Prague also established an agency as part of its responsibilities. These decentralised authorities began to operate on 1st July 1928 and the position of Chief County Physician was abolished. The agency, as part of the Ministry of Public Health and Physical Education, was transformed into Provincial Healthcare Office. The role of healthcare education was also taken over by the Provincial Healthcare Office, headed by a physician, who also fulfilled some of the tasks of the period related to the dissemination of healthcare information with a focus on battling superstitions and prejudice. Among the leading healthcare educational workers of the period was Ivan Stodola (1888–1977). He worked as a county physician, later as a healthcare inspector in Bratislava. In 1934 he was appointed to the position of Chief Healthcare Advisor and Head of the Provincial Healthcare Office. The plans of the Ministry of Public Health and Physical Education, which focused on the creation of a unified law for healthcare that would govern healthcare issues on a mass scale, were not implemented in the interwar period (Falisová in Zemko 2004).

The first Minister of Healthcare of the Czechoslovak Republic was the Slovak Vavro Šrobár. As a physician and governmental officer, Šrobár contributed to the development of healthcare in Slovakia

by organising the Czechoslovak Red Cross, the battle against tuberculosis and care for children's health, by establishing a child treatment institute in Dolný Smokovec. From 1922 until he retired, he lectured at the Faculty of Medicine of Comenius University in Bratislava, where he became the Professor of Social Medical Care in 1935. As a professor he began to build the institute of social medical care and especially focused on the issues of occupational and social medical care.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the research and the concept of the study, archival materials from the National Archive in Prague, the Security Services Archive of the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic in Prague, the Slovak National Archive in Bratislava, the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent Archive in Nitra and the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross Archive in Trnava were used. Further support came from extant archive documents of the Provincial Office in Bratislava, stored in the Slovak National Archive, material on the existence of the Nursing School of the Daughters of Charity in Košice, the State Hospital in Košice from the National Archive in Prague, the Chronicles of the Nursing School of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, the period press and all the preserved volumes of the *Československá nemocnice* (Czechoslovak Hospital) magazine.

The inductive method was used in the study, which allowed us to arrive at generalised conclusions. It was also possible to use a direct method, which allowed historical facts to be established through the direct study of sources. Where the research material made it possible, a comparative method was used and within it we applied a diachronic viewpoint which observes the historical development in its natural chronological order.

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION OF PHYSICIANS

Following the foundation of Czechoslovakia, the Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education needed to deal with a number of issues related to the poor state of health of the population and the spread of a number of diseases of affluence. It was only gradually that attention started to focus on the education of medical personnel. It was necessary to address the question of the provision of medical personnel, both through the education of physicians, and of auxiliary staff. The education of physicians in Slovakia was almost immediately resolved following the establishment of the republic. Bratislava had experience with the operation of a university faculty of medicine. In 1912, the Hungarian Diet decided to establish a university in Bratislava (Pressburg / Pozsony), named after the Empress, Queen Elisabeth, the wife of Franz Joseph I. The university had its ceremonial opening on the 13th October 1914, but lectures only commenced in April 1915. The war prevented the proper operation of the university. Initially the university was to have four faculties, but only the Faculty of Law and part of the Faculty of Medicine was truly in operation. After the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, the state was not interested in maintaining Elisabeth University as a Hungarian educational institution or any links to it. On 27th June 1919, the revolutionary National Assembly adopted Act No. 375/1919 Collection of Laws and Decrees that founded a new university to replace Elisabeth University. The university was to have four faculties: Law, Medicine, Natural Science and Philosophy, and the lectures would be in Czech and Slovak. Through a governmental decree of November 1919 the university was named after the well-known educator Johann Amos Comenius. The Faculty of Medicine was established first in 1919 (Letz 2010). The educational committee of the Faculty of Medicine of Charles University recommended professors for the new Faculty of Medicine. The first Faculty Dean, Gustáv Müller, and the first University Rector, Kristian Hynek, were elected at a preparatory meeting of professors on the 8th August 1919. At following meetings in August and September, elections were held for further faculty and university officers and heads of clinics and the plans for the technical takeover of the clinics and the estate of Elisabeth University and budget issues etc. were approved. Czech physicians were the first professors at the university in Bratislava; they also taught at the Faculty of Medicine and alternated in the highest positions of the university administration (Mesiarkin 2019).

The foundation of a university in Bratislava was a real act of statesmanship and was motivated by societal factors such as the low number of physicians in Slovakia and the poor healthcare awareness of the population. The foundation of the faculty and that only 6 months later it was ready to start instruction was positively influenced by the fact that Bratislava was home to the best clinical workplaces in the whole of the former Kingdom of Hungary. The foundation of the university and faculty was one of the basic pillars required to build a healthcare and education system in the new country. Representatives of both the faculty and university declared the foundation of the university as an important factor in the formation of a new national identity, as asserted by Mesiarkin (2019, pp. 9-10).

In the 1930s physicians began to ask that nursing be included in the medical education at faculties of medicine. Training was to take place in cooperation with nursing schools. This proposal was presented to the Committee for the Reform of Medical Studies, a subcommittee of the Rationalisation and Normalisation Committee, at the Masaryk Academy of Labour, by Professor Bohuslav Bouček. The chief reason for the inclusion of nursing into the education of physicians was that they did not realise or understand the proper level of nursing required and the results of good nursing care. He had pioneering ideas for the introduction of nursing into the education of physicians and indirectly supported growth in the level of nursing education in the country. The objective was that students, through their direct participation and personal experience, would gain a notion of the *“needs of minor nursing care, would develop a deeper understanding for their charges and form a more lively comprehension that was necessary for the elevation of nursing”*. He considered nursing to be part of medical care and insisted on the general and specialist education of nurses and adequate remuneration. He proposed that nursing should already be included in the first semesters with 2 lectures per week and mandatory practical training. The medical nursing course was to consist of theoretical lectures supplemented by suitable practical exercises that would culminate in a mandatory test that followed a discussion-based examination format. Brouček’s proposals were published in the periodical *Czechoslovak Hospital* in 1932 (Bouček 1932).

NURSING COURSES

From a categorisation viewpoint, various types of healthcare personnel worked in medical facilities in Slovakia in the interwar period: certified nurses, nuns, practical nurses and untrained practical nurses (Falisová 2006). Due to a lack of auxiliary personnel, a number of hospitals organised nursing courses for orderlies. The founding of nursing schools was preceded by the establishment of nursing courses. The ground for the foundation of the first nursing school – by the order of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in Bratislava – was prepared by these nursing courses, the organisation of which was made possible by permission from the Minister of Public Healthcare and Physical Education, Dr. Jozef Tiso, on 15th March 1929.

The Czechoslovak Red Cross, founded in January 1919, was active in healthcare education throughout the whole of the Czechoslovak Republic. As an auxiliary component of the military healthcare service, it received assignments directly from the Ministry of National Defence and trained nurses worked in its service. It played an important role in the battle against epidemics, especially in Slovakia, and through the provision of help to the population affected by natural disasters. The Czechoslovak Red Cross focused on care for children, founded courses on child care for mothers, children’s nurseries and shelters, it opened counselling centres, boarding houses and canteens. It founded and ran nursing courses, dedicated attention to healthcare propaganda and healthcare education. It organised lectures, film showings, issued leaflets, published healthcare-educational literature, and the magazine of the Red Cross Administration (Beniak 1993).

In the 1930s nursing courses within the Czechoslovak Republic were organised by the state hospitals in Bratislava, Košice, Žilina, Mukachevo, in the general hospital in Prague and the state run Šrobár Children’s Institute in Smokovec. They were short-term, six-month, courses for auxiliary nurses which were run under the Section 57 of the governmental decree of the 17th April 1927, No. 22 Collection of Laws and Decrees. Due to this decree nursing practice was carried out by several categories of nurses.

Graduates of the courses organised by the Czechoslovak Red Cross were also employed in hospitals in this manner. A hairdresser or tailor had to undergo a proper craft apprenticeship and pass final examinations to obtain a vocational certificate. It was paradoxical that no training was required for a nurse who held the health or life of a person in their hands. It was also for this reason that unified and standardised education and training for nurses became a requirement, both in the interest of certified nurses and the general public.

By decree No. 32739 of 5th January 1931, the Ministry of Public Health and Physical Education organised a second nursing course, but only in the hospitals in Bratislava and Košice (Správy / News 1931). Even before the establishment of an independent Slovak province of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, Sister Mária Fides Dermeková, on the 19th July 1927, willingly accepted the appointment by the Mother Superior, Sister Teodózia Hossová, to organise nursing courses for the nuns. In 1931 Sister Dermeková took on the organisation of another nursing course for the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross. It was the second state nursing course, it took place from the 3rd February to 9th June 1931 and culminated in the final state examination. Sister Dermeková summarised and expanded the whole curriculum. Thoroughly and with great enthusiasm, she put together and copied the whole curriculum as a study aid for participants. The courses took place in the State Hospital in Bratislava. The head of the examination committee was a specialist consultant from the Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education in Prague, JUDr. Rudolf Bébr. Twenty nuns and forty lay nurses participated in and successfully completed the course. The management of the State Hospital expressed thanks to the Provincial Mother Superior, Sister M. F. Dermeková, for leading the course. She obtained her own specialist nursing education by studying at the two-year nursing school in Prague and supplemented the required knowledge about nursing the sick with her practical experience, gained through specialist working visits to larger hospitals in the country and nursing schools in Chomutov and Opava (Morovicsová 2017). Dermeková was also a lecturer and responsible for the methodology of the courses of study. After their completion, she was able to more fully dedicate herself to the foundation of a nursing school in Bratislava. She voluntarily developed the whole concept and syllabus of the school. This material went on to become the point of departure for the establishment of the first nursing school in Slovakia, at which nuns as well as lay students studied.

The successful completion of the second nursing course was well received by the specialist public, representatives of the Czechoslovak Red Cross, lay persons and persons interested in the nursing profession. The material used later became the starting point for the establishment of a new nursing school, which opened the road for the establishment of the first nursing school in Slovakia. The third nursing course, led by M. F. Dermeková, took place in the premises of the newly founded institution.

In the late 1930s nursing courses were also organised by the Nuns of Saint Vincent in their provincial seat in Ladce, where novices prepared for a profession of a nurse and used the study aids from the former nursing school in Košice. They also used old textbooks, as well as brochures, printed by their own printing works in Ladce, based on the lectures given by the professors and physicians of the former nursing school in Košice. They continued to use them until the opening of a nursing school in Trenčín, but this did not take place until after the Second World War.

NURSING SCHOOLS

In the 1920s, the first social-healthcare school in Slovakia, at Turčiansky Sv. Martin, was put into operation by the state, it focused on spreading information throughout rural areas, where it was necessary to overcome a great deal of prejudice and superstition. The institute was founded with financial support from Slovaks in the United States of America and the Head of the Czechoslovak Red Cross, Dr. Alice Masaryková (Votrubová 1931). The institute was intended to educate people who would be able to carry out social work among the rural Slovak population. In Turčiansky Sv. Martin, the students came into direct contact with the common people and got to know their standard of life and needs.

The first nursing school in the territory of Slovakia was founded by the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross (Haptvoglová 2008). Sister Fides Dermeková was responsible for organising its establishment (Ilievová & Juríková & Lichner 2020). At that time, the Congregation asked the

Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education in Prague for permission to establish a nursing school. The request had to be supplemented by the school statutes, curriculum, and information about the building in which the school was to operate, or at least a plan for the school. The model for the statutes and curriculum was provided, in German, by the nursing school established by a German province of the Congregation in Chomutov. The statutes contained twelve clauses which defined the reason for the foundation of the school, the language of instruction (the official language of the state), the conditions for admission, the subjects taught, the way in which the examination committee should be appointed and its composition, the conditions of admittance to final examinations, the skills and roles of the headmaster and teachers and the general supervision of the school, performed by the Provincial Office. Admittance to the final examination had to be approved by the Provincial Office and it was only permitted to re-take the exam once. Despite problems finding suitable teaching premises, the first school in Slovakia to offer a two-year nursing course was founded and the state promised to provide the Congregation with 500,000 crowns for the construction of the school without delay.

It opened in 1931 and the first course was due to start in the 1931/1932 school year, which met with a positive response from the specialist press (*Československá nemocnice* 1931). Prior to the beginning of the academic year it was necessary to provide evidence that several conditions had been fulfilled: the school had suitable premises, the staffing proposal for the specialist headmaster and teaching staff had been met and there was a detailed plan for the practical training of the students. Fifteen pupils, aged 18 to 27, began the course of study in the first year – twelve sisters from the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross and three from the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of Saint Vincent of Rožňava. The applicants were required to be between 16 and 30, had graduated from a municipal school, or possess an alternative equivalent education. In the evaluation of physical aptitude, emphasis was put on a suitable, correctly developed and normal physique. From a psychological point of view, the Congregation only allowed those of its members whose character was suitable for the nursing of ill people to join the course of study, something the Mothers Superior verified before they started. For lay applicants, the management of the school requested information from the headmasters of the schools from which they had graduated. Instruction began on the 4th November 1931. The first lessons were lectures on anatomy and hygiene. Based on a request from the Congregation, the subjects were taught by professors, associate professors and assistants from the Faculty of Medicine of Comenius University in Bratislava.

In the first school year, the pupils were educated in theoretical subjects, with the exception of nursing techniques. In the second year the emphasis was on practical skills and training took place within departments of the State Hospital in Bratislava. The first-year lectures were completed in June 1932 and after the end of the school year, the students helped in the hospital or travelled home for a short period of leave. Gradually, the school developed its own classrooms, laboratories, study halls, a room with aids to help to improve nursing techniques and specialist libraries. The first group of final examinations took place in June 1933. This was an exceptional and historical event in that they were the first final examinations at the first nursing school to have been held in Slovakia.

When the nursing school of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in Bratislava first opened and over its first decade of operation, it is possible to observe the difficulties the school had to deal with. In the early years, mastering Slovak and the issue of non-unified textbooks proved to be a significant problem for students, later it was the political circumstances which encroached upon its operation. That notwithstanding, the operation of the school into the 1950s was of major significance in the training of nursing personnel in Slovakia (Dobrotková – Ilievová – Juríková 2023).

The Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul was another church order which for many years provided charitable care in the former Kingdom of Hungary. Its members worked as nurses in a number of existing hospitals. The “Vincentians” worked in today’s Slovakia from the mid-19th century. The nuns provided their services in hospitals; after 1922, in addition to the county hospitals in Nitra, Trnava and Trenčín, they worked in the state hospitals in Košice, Turčiansky Sv. Martin and Ružomberok, the provincial hospital in Levoča, the municipal hospitals in Kremnica, Michalovce and Likier, in the institute for the mentally ill in Pezinok, the state sanatorium in Trenčianske Teplice, the municipal old people’s home in Banská Bystrica, the poorhouses in Žilina and Kremnica, the Institute

for the Blind in Báhoň and in a number of other medical institutions and sanatoria and finally they also provided assistance to prisoners in Ilava. From Ladce, the Vincentians went on missions to Iran, Indochina and Peru (Bucková 2022).

With respect to the extensive activities of the Vincentians in hospitals, it was necessary for the sisters to have a sufficient level of education that allowed them to correctly perform their profession. After opening the provincial house in Ladce, the Superiors of the order focused on opportunities to provide sisters with the basics of a nursing and healthcare education. Thus, they made great efforts to establish a proper, two-year nursing school. In 1932 the Company founded a nursing school in Košice (Morovicsová 2017). The decision to locate the school in Košice was related to the operation of the Vincentian sisters in Košice hospital from as far back as 1877 and to the existence of the most up-to-date hospital in the country. The establishment of a nursing school went ahead successfully, the Company notified the Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education on the 1st August 1932 that the director of the school would be the Chief Institutional Physician, Dr. Adolf Měska and the School Manager would be Sister Maria Jiroušková; she was a municipal school specialist teacher, a graduate of a nursing school in Prague, and held a nursing certificate. The school was inspired by the Statutes of the Nursing School of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in Bratislava and on the 1st August 1932 it obtained the approval of the Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education to start teaching.

The two-year Nursing School of the Company of the Daughters of Christian Love of Saint Vincent de Paul also became a public school, which meant that in addition to nuns they also accepted lay applicants, who had to be at least 18 (Dobrotková – Ilievová – Juríková 2023). It was mainly physicians from the Košice hospital who taught at the school; it was managed by Sister Mária Jiroušková, who was enabled her to provide practical training to the sisters.

The subjects taught at the nursing school in Košice were human anatomy, the physiological activity of individual organs, general study of the sick, nursing techniques, nursing of internal, surgical and child patients; skin, infectious, mental and women's diseases, nursing after birth and instruction on the provision of service at outpatient departments. Among other subjects were components of food, hospital diets, food for infants, the administrative activities of hospitals, as well as civics and law as related to healthcare, social care and public nursing. Having completed their training, pupils in the second year could sit a diploma examination which tested all the subjects, both theoretical and practical.

Paradoxically, despite the exceptional effort made by the sisters in founding the school, its successful beginnings and ongoing operation, they lost it in 1938, as a result of the Vienna Award. The sisters were required to leave both the school and the Košice hospital and were replaced by Hungarian nurses.

EDUCATION OF MIDWIVES

During the time of the establishment of the first CSR, the training of midwives took place under regulations set out in Hungarian Act No. XIV of 1876 on public healthcare, which was in force until 1928. In the CSR, institutionalised education was provided by eight schools for midwives (Pekařová in Rollerová 2013). They were irregularly spread across the country and the individual educational institutions differed from each other in various aspects. In particular these differences related to the conditions of acceptance of students for study, the length of study and the format of the final examinations. Of the eight schools for midwives in the CSR, five operated in Slovakia and Transcarpathian Ruthenia. The schools in Bratislava, Košice and Uzhhorod provided five-month courses for midwives and their studies concluded with an examination before a committee. A diametrically different manner of training was provided by the schools in Nitra and Rimavská Sobota. They did not even meet basic requirements, the length of study was only two months, the students were not even required to be literate, and the final examination did not take place before a committee. (*Věstník věnovaný zájmům porodních asistentek v republice Československé* 1927). For these reasons, the schools in Nitra and Rimavská Sobota were closed down shortly after the establishment of the CSR. In time, the specialist education of midwives in the CSR was only provided by schools for midwives in Bratislava, Košice and Uzhhorod. They only accepted graduates of municipal schools and the studies were extended to nine months. Their activities were supported by districts, cities and municipalities.

Poor students were provided with support, or they received relief on school and test fees. The level of interest in the courses exceeded the capacity of the schools (Bokesová – Uherová 1989). Expert supervision of the education of midwives was taken over by physicians from the Clinic of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of Comenius University under Professor MUDr. Gustáv Müller. The activity of midwives was supervised by official physicians under decree No. 10991/1925 from the Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education.

Reform of the education and training of midwives was under consideration immediately after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic. Their previous lack of adequate preparation, the short duration of the training courses and the absence of any postgraduate courses for practical midwives were highlighted. The motivation for the necessary changes in the specialist training of midwives came from both the central authorities and directly from clinical practice (Falisová 2007). A significant shift in the training of midwives was brought about by Act No. 200/1928 on the auxiliary practice of obstetrics, education and training of midwives. It had four parts: the auxiliary practice of obstetrics, the education and training of midwives and penalties. Significant changes imposed by the act were the modification of the specialist training for midwives which was extended to ten or more months and the issue of diplomas giving the right to practice obstetrics. The diplomas could only be issued by state institutions for the education and training of midwives which reported directly to the Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education. The establishment of institutions for the education and training of midwives was governed by a decree of the Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education (Morovicsová 2017), under which three state institutions were established in the territory of Slovakia and Transcarpathian Ruthenia: Bratislava, Košice and Uzhhorod. The courses in Bratislava and Košice were taught in Slovak and in Uzhhorod in the local “Transcarpathian Ruthenian” language.

Institutions for the education and training of midwives were independent or affiliated to state hospitals or medical and humanitarian institutes with a department of gynaecology and obstetrics. They were financially independent and directly subordinate to the Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education. It was required that the director of the state institution was also the head physician of the maternity hospital or department of gynaecology and obstetrics where the practical training of students took place. Within the syllabus, particular attention was dedicated to the basics of sepsis, antisepsis, disinfection of the body and study of the composition and activity of the human body focused on women.

The first part of the course had to last at least four months and was focused on the physiological course of pregnancy, birth, puerperium and infant care. The subject matter of the second part was the study of the pathology of pregnancy, birth, puerperium, study of female diseases, sexually transmitted diseases and the legal regulations governing obstetrics practice. From an organisational viewpoint the morning lessons were dedicated to theoretical training, revision of the syllabus and practical exercises. The afternoon concentrated on the individual training of candidates, during which they had the opportunity to acquire practical skills on dummies or models in the dormitory study hall.

The final examination had written and oral sections. The oral section was carried out before a committee made up of a representative of the Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education, the director of the institution, lecturing assistants and other members of the teaching staff (Morovicsová & Morovics 2013). Act No. 200/1928 also introduced refresher courses for midwives. The role of these refresher courses was to ensure that the general requirement that, through proper supervision, suitable revision of the syllabus and knowledge of the latest techniques and experiences, negative outcomes could be avoided, particularly in less experienced assistants, was met.

CONCLUSIONS

In addition to physicians, the healthcare education system in the interwar period also provided institutional training to nurses and midwives. Physicians were educated at the newly founded Faculty of Medicine of Comenius University in Bratislava and non-certified nurses gained their education on the courses run by the Czechoslovak Red Cross, American Red Cross and English Red Cross along with training supplied by state hospitals, as they suffered from a lack of auxiliary nursing staff. This shortage continued until the first nursing schools were founded in the late 1920s and early 1930s, which provided

practically and theoretically trained certified nurses. The lack of specialist nurses meant that the courses admitted all the applicants who showed interest. Short-term courses organised by the Czechoslovak Red Cross were completed by several hundred women. The courses included both theory and specialist hospital practice. It was the most basic necessary preparation; they gained further knowledge from their practical experience at work. After the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, midwives were trained through courses which lasted five months, until 1928 when an act on the training and education of midwives was passed. This moved responsibility for training to the Ministry of Public Healthcare and Physical Education. The training was managed by three state institutions in Bratislava, Košice and Užhorod.

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