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Caring With the Soul of A Dā'I: Reclaiming the Meaning of Nursing in Islam

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In contemporary healthcare systems, nursing is often understood primarily as a professional career that demands clinical competence, technical efficiency and disciplined practice. While this perspective is valid, the Islamic worldview offers a deeper understanding of nursing that extends beyond professional responsibility alone. In Islam, nursing represents a form of *amanah* (trust), compassion and service to humanity rooted in spiritual and moral values. When these dimensions are neglected, nursing risks becoming merely a mechanical routine that loses its humanistic and spiritual essence. These editorial aims to reframe nursing from an Islamic perspective by highlighting its spiritual, ethical, and compassionate dimensions, while discussing its relevance to contemporary nursing practice.

Islam places great importance on caring for the sick because it is closely related to the preservation of life, one of the primary objectives of *Maqasid al-Shariah*. The Qur'an states in Surah al-Ma'idah (5:32) that whoever saves one life is as though he has saved all of humanity (1). This verse provides profound ethical significance for the nursing profession. Nurses are not merely healthcare workers who administer medications or perform clinical procedures; they are individuals who stand beside patients during moments of fear, weakness, pain and vulnerability.

From this perspective, Muslim nurses should not perceive themselves solely as clinical practitioners. They also embody Islamic moral values in every interaction with patients and families. *Da'wah* in nursing does not necessarily occur through formal preaching or lengthy religious advice. Rather, it is reflected through compassionate communication, patience in listening to patients' concerns, honesty in explaining treatment, protection of patient dignity and empathy toward those who are suffering. Recent literature on Muslim patient needs highlights the importance of understanding religious and cultural values in order to provide patient-centred and culturally sensitive healthcare (2).

This issue becomes even more significant considering that nursing continues to be regarded as a highly trusted profession. The American Nurses Association, reporting on Gallup's 2025 poll, noted that nurses were ranked the most trusted professionals for the 24th consecutive year, with 75% of Americans rating nurses' honesty and ethical standards as high or very high (3). This public trust creates a meaningful space for nurses to communicate with patients, especially when patients experience fear, uncertainty, emotional distress and physical suffering. Within this space of trust, the Islamic values of *rahmah* (mercy) and *ihsan* (excellence and benevolence) can be translated into practical acts of compassionate care.

Compassionate nursing is supported by diverse ethical, philosophical, and religious traditions. This editorial does not suggest that compassion is exclusive to Islam; rather, it explores how Islamic teachings provide a distinctive framework for understanding compassionate nursing among Muslim healthcare professionals. The greatest model of compassionate care is Prophet Muhammad SAW. The Qur'an describes the Prophet's gentleness in Surah Ali 'Imran (3:159), emphasizing that if he had been harsh or hard-hearted, people would have distanced themselves from him (1). This Qur'anic principle is highly relevant to nursing practice. Patients require not only accurate clinical treatment but also humane interactions that provide emotional reassurance, dignity and hope. Such compassionate practice reflects an agent-centred understanding of nursing ethics in which professional actions are guided not only by technical competence but also by moral intention and ethical responsibility (4).

Nevertheless, the realities of nursing practice today cannot be ignored. Heavy workloads, staff shortages, emotional exhaustion, excessive documentation and challenging interactions with patients and families often place considerable pressure on nurses. Recent evidence shows that nursing shortages and workforce turnover have increased workload and the risk of burnout and stress among nurses (5). Therefore, calls for nurses to continuously demonstrate patience and compassion must also acknowledge the systemic and occupational burdens they face within modern healthcare environments.

In Islam, spiritual strength serves as an essential source of resilience in facing life's

challenges. Muslim nurses should continuously renew their intention that nursing is an act of worship and service for the sake of Allah SWT. Spiritual practices such as prayer, remembrance of Allah, reflection and reliance upon divine guidance may strengthen emotional and spiritual endurance in caregiving. A recent review on Islamic spiritual care among critically ill Muslim patients also emphasized the importance of spiritual care, including Qur'anic recitation and religiously sensitive support, as part of holistic healthcare (6). At the same time, healthcare institutions have a responsibility to create more compassionate work environments that support nurses' psychological well-being and recognize their contributions with dignity and fairness.

This editorial presents a conceptual perspective grounded in Islamic teachings and contemporary literature. Its viewpoints may not be universally applicable across all healthcare settings, but are intended to stimulate reflection and dialogue on spiritually informed nursing practice.

Ultimately, nursing in Islam should be restored to its broader and more holistic meaning. It is not merely a profession measured by work schedules and clinical tasks, but a field of worship, compassion and subtle *da'wah*. Through professional discipline, empathy, ethical communication and patience, Muslim nurses can embody Islamic values within healthcare practice. Patients may forget many clinical procedures performed during their treatment, but they will always remember how they were treated as human beings. It is through such compassionate care that nursing regains the soul of a *dā'i*.

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