



Editorial

## The importance of studying sociology for nursing

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Contemporary nursing is no longer limited to the biomedical model of care. In addition to the biological determinants of health and illness, the importance of social, cultural, and economic factors is increasingly emphasised, as they fundamentally influence patients' health behaviour, their relationship to treatment, and the way they use health services. In this context, the study of sociology - especially the sociology of medicine and nursing - is gaining an important place in the education of health professionals.

Sociology provides a theoretical and analytical framework for understanding the relationship between health and society. The classical sociological theory of Talcott Parsons already drew attention to the social dimension of illness through the concept of the "sick role", which points to the social expectations and norms associated with illness and health care (Parsons, 1951). Modern sociology of health develops this perspective further and analyses, for example, the social determinants of health, the professional roles of health workers, and the institutional functioning of health systems (Cockerham, 2025; Germov, 2005). For nursing, these approaches are an important tool for understanding the broader context of care.

Empirical studies have long confirmed that social conditions of life significantly influence the health status of individuals and populations. Socioeconomic status, education, social support and lifestyle are among the key determinants of health and health inequalities (Marmot et al., 2020; WHO, 2008). The importance of these factors is also confirmed by studies conducted in the Czech environment. For example, Kebza (2005) points out that social determinants of health constitute an important framework for understanding differences in population health status and emphasises their relevance for healthcare practice. For nurses, this means that quality care must reflect not only biological but also social aspects of the patient's situation.

Sociological knowledge can also help nurses understand patients' and their families' attitudes, values, and expectations. Cultural norms, social experiences and the level of health literacy significantly influence health behaviour. Re-

search shows that health literacy is one of the important factors influencing patients' ability to understand health information, navigate the health system and actively participate in decisions about their own treatment. In the Czech context, Kučera et al. (2016) note that lower levels of health literacy can negatively affect the use of preventive programmes and patient cooperation with healthcare staff. A nurse who understands the social context of health behaviour can therefore more effectively support patients in navigating health information and changing health behaviour.

Another important contribution of sociology to nursing is the analysis of relationships in the health care system. The interaction between a nurse, a doctor and a patient is a complex social process that is influenced by professional roles, institutional culture and power relations in health care organisations. Research on interprofessional collaboration shows that the quality of communication and collaboration among health care professions has a direct impact on patient safety, quality of care, and the job satisfaction of health care professionals (Reeves et al., 2018). A sociological perspective can thus contribute to a better understanding of professional roles and the development of effective teamwork in health care facilities.

Sociology also contributes to the development of culturally sensitive care. Globalisation and migration are increasing cultural diversity in the patient population, placing new demands on communication between healthcare professionals and patients. Research shows that healthcare professionals' cultural competence can contribute to a better understanding of patients' needs and to higher-quality care (Betancourt et al., 2023). Therefore, sociological knowledge helps nurses to understand the cultural values, norms and health beliefs of patients from different social and cultural backgrounds (Bártlová, 2005).

The importance of sociology is also reflected in nursing education. Integrating sociological topics into the nursing curriculum can support the development of critical thinking, the analysis of the social determinants of health, and an understanding of health inequalities. It also allows students to

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better reflect on their own professional role within the health system and develop the competencies needed for communication with patients and for interdisciplinary collaboration (Bleakley, 2015).

However, it is necessary to reflect on the limits of sociological approaches in nursing. Sociological concepts are often relatively abstract, and their direct application in clinical practice can be difficult. In addition, the biomedical model still prevails in health education, leading to less emphasis on the social and human dimensions of care (Cockerham, 2025). Another limitation is that many social determinants of health – for example, socioeconomic inequalities or structural living conditions – are beyond the direct control of health professionals and require broader systemic and policy changes for resolution.

Despite these limitations, sociology is an important tool for understanding the complex relationships between health, illness, and society. For nursing, a sociological perspective can contribute to a deeper understanding of patients, the development of culturally sensitive care, and reflection on one's own professional role within the health system.

In times of population ageing, growing health inequalities, and changing healthcare systems, the importance of sociological education for nurses is increasing. Therefore, the study of sociology cannot be understood solely as a supplementary theoretical discipline but as an important part of the professional training of healthcare professionals, enabling them to better respond to the complex challenges of contemporary healthcare.

### **Ethical aspects and conflict of interest**

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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