

## The Impact of Martha Rogers' Nursing Science in Spain

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### Abstract

To ascertain the possible impact of Rogerian Science on nursing in Spain, a bibliographic study of journals publishing in Spanish has been carried out. The results indicate a scarcity of articles on Rogers' model, which is in line with the present authors' perception of a general lack of awareness and appreciation of the model within their own national (Spanish) nursing community. Bibliographic results on Rogerian literature published in other (non-English) European languages are also presented, for comparison with the result for Spanish. Nursing research in Spain is still in the process of development, the incorporation of nursing into the European Higher Education Programme has allowed improvements in academic training but there is a need to call to action for Spanish nurses to explore out of the Scientific Iberoamerican space (ECI).

### Introduction

Rogers Nursing Science emerged in the United States as a major breakthrough in nursing knowledge, a source from which a wealth of benefits can be derived on an immediate and practical level, and from which nursing research can continue to draw inspiration. One of the central tenets of Rogerian Science is the concept of unitary view of the human being. One may adopt this concept as a metaphor for nursing itself, by considering the notion of nursing as a whole, that it is more than the sum of its parts, formed from different and innumerable realities, with an energy that is in continuous motion, a capacity for influencing others' fields, a sensitivity to be influenced in turn by the energy that conveys the perspective of nursing itself. Rogers highlighted that the goal of nursing is to promote health on the grounds of a positive and optimistic approach related to the model of the Unitary Human Being (UHB), placing nurses right in the centre of the healthcare system [1].

In order to take a reality check on the impact of the model outside the context of North American nursing, where it was born (from Rogers' studies when based at New York University), the present article presents a summary of the available literature on Rogers' ideas that has been published in Spanish as well as in various other European languages (other than English). The result for Spanish is discussed in the context of the present authors' nursing experience. A selection of some of the important work published in English is also provided—albeit a non-exhaustive list of (Rogerian) literature—as a starting point for those interested in exploring Rogers' model with a view to its incorporation in university study in Spain and elsewhere.

### Details on Bibliographic Searches

Bibliographic searches through the most extensive nursing databases (CUIDEN, DOYMA, CINHALL, MEDLINE, SCIRUS and COCRHAN) at the disposal of Spanish health service professionals (at hospitals, health centers or universities) were carried out in order to gather information on essays based on Rogers' model published in Spanish or one of several other European (other than English) languages—see below. The mesh terms “Martha Rogers”, “Rogers'

science of unitary human beings”, “Rogerian Science” and “Rogers Nursing Science” were used in the searches, along with other more generic terms widely associated with nursing that employs Rogers' UHB model, such as “guided imagery”, “therapeutic touch” and “music therapy”. Of course, the use of the English written mesh terms implies the requirement of an available abstract in English for any relevant article presented in Spanish or any other European (other than English) language; otherwise such an article is not detected in the bibliographic searches.

### Results and Discussion of Bibliometric Analysis

Table 1 shows a summary of articles found published in various European languages (other than English). Precious little literature is found for Spanish—just one essay, focusing on the principles of Rogerian Science in general terms, which appeared in a Spanish journal [2]. For the case of the German language, slightly more literature is found—namely, three essays relating to Rogers Nursing Science published in the German journal *Pflege*. The first of these articles introduces Rogers' theory in the context of a discussion of the changes underway, at that time, in nursing practice in Germany [3]. The second is related to the implication of Rogers' model in the participation process of human field patterning within nursing in a Germany hospital [4]. The third essay (from that same journal) is authored by a psychologist, and presents a discussion that argues that holistic nursing theory is nearly impossible, and that the at-times-ambiguous boundaries of nursing practice should be defined in a more clear fashion [5].

Language	Number of articles	Reference(s)
Spanish	1	[2]
German	3	[3-5]
French	2	[6,7]
Portuguese	2	[8,9]

Italian	1	[10]
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**Table 1:** A summary of the articles relating to Rogers' model that have been found published in several European (other than English) languages.

Two papers are found published for the French language, one by Gagnon en 1991 [6], which presents a qualitative experiment based on Rogers' theory and the other by Allard en 1998 [7], which deal with the principles of the Rogerian Science. It should be noted that both of those authors had Canadian (University) affiliations at the time publication. Two articles are also found for Portuguese, from authors based in Portugal [8,9]. Both deal with Rogers' theory and its use in clinical nursing. For the Italian language, like the case of Spanish, only one article is found, which discusses Rogers' theory within the context of nursing practice [10]. Here the rather recent year of publication (2007) contrasts strongly with those of the articles published in the other languages (all appearing at least around a decade earlier).

Despite the potential and beauty of Rogers Nursing Science, the availability of related literature published in Spanish or other European languages is more than scarce. Of course, English being the lingua franca for the dissemination of theories and discussion within the international scientific community, one will always expect to find a significantly smaller number of articles in any field of study published in a non-English language as compared with in English. However, in the case of the search result for Spanish publications on Rogers' theory, the scarcity of literature is in line with the present authors' own personal perceptions based on their experience both in a hospital and a university environment (in Spain)—namely, that there is a general lack of awareness and appreciation of Rogerian Science within the Spanish nursing community. Thus a plausible answer to the question posed in the present article's title would be no, the vast literature on Rogers Nursing Science (originally published in English) has apparently failed to reach the grass roots of nursing education in Spain. As Elizabeth Barrett pointed out in her essay [11] these issues require extensive knowledge and understanding which may be a little exotic for Europeans and this could have been one of the obstacles that have hampered the development of Rogers' model in European and Spanish nursing. Another point to be considered regarding the scarcity of articles by the Spanish nursing community on Roger's model is that this community has a predominant tendency to inform itself via, and subsequently publish within, the Iberoamerican Scientific Space [12,13] The lack of English-language knowledge made very difficult to explore out of this space. Spanish nurse researchers read and publish in journal of little impact with a very few publications in English-Language journals [13].

## Towards the Enrichment of Spanish Nursing

The present nursing climate in Spain—where, with the development of doctoral degree programs, a major process of change at the university level is underway—may provide a good opportunity for introducing Rogers Nursing Science, and other theories as the recognition of doctoral education in nursing as being essential to building nursing's own knowledge base becomes increasingly apparent (it is worth noting that the study program and career preparation are two of the five elements that were described by Anderson [14] as quality-related components of nursing doctoral education). The Bologna Process, now underway in Europe, should also prove fruitful in this respect, since several curricula agreed upon through Bologna

Accords include many of the recommendations and ideas set forth by Martha Rogers. Nevertheless, it will be through the nursing education offered by master degree and doctorate studies, that the discipline of nursing will truly start to be nourished by its own knowledge. Indeed, Rogers considered that the body of knowledge created to develop nursing science should come directly from basic research [15].

It may be expected to take time for the UHB model to be applied in Spanish nursing, since, for example, health professionals viewing non-invasive techniques as belonging exclusively to the territory of psychology may require time to change their mind set. Furthermore the introduction of Rogerian Science may be expected to begin with aspects that combine more readily with models traditionally implemented in Spain such as those of Virginia Henderson or Dorothea Orem. In general, by focussing more on what connects different nursing models rather than what may differentiate them, an alternative, richer and more rewarding nursing methodology should follow.

It is hoped that the scarcity of literature on Rogerian Science published in Spanish and other European languages (other than English) that has been highlighted in the present article will constitute a "call to action" for Spanish nurses to research in theories such as Rogers', that have been of such great utility to nurses in the United States, and find a way to analyze, research and discuss if this model could be useful in our society. In the meantime, the pathway to arrive to some conclusions about this theory could be an enrichment of resources, ideas, opinions and results that can only be a way to help us to understand improve and re-assess what nursing care involves in those societies that have been undergoing a fast-moving process of change over the last few centuries. They should also make us believe more in the vocation and the discipline of nursing, which only the "carer" experiences and who, day by day, learns about how to improve his/her care services.

A great variety of essays and contributions on Rogers' work have, of course, been published in English, demonstrating the impact and development of Rogers' model in Anglo-American countries, where a broad experience gained in distinct areas of application may be appreciated. The following (chronologically ordered) list is a selection of some of the most relevant articles (since the objective here is not been to produce an exhaustive review of the literature, other important articles will certainly be missing from this list), which, it is hoped, will serve university instructors in Spain (and elsewhere) interested in the possibility of incorporating Rogers Nursing Science into under- and postgraduate study programs [11,16-34].

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