



**Accelerating Progress for Safe Patient-Centred
Universal Health Coverage**

Patient Solidarity Day

Geneva, Switzerland; 6 December 2019 – On the occasion of Patient Solidarity Day, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) stands together with the International Alliance of Patients’ Organizations (IAPO) to call for “Acceleration of Progress for Safe Patient-Centred Universal Health Coverage (UHC)” to guarantee safe healthcare for all.

Howard Catton, ICN’s Chief Executive Officer said

“Nurses are working in partnership with patients to improve the safety of healthcare delivery across all settings and achieve universal health coverage. Together, we must ensure that cost-saving measures do not threaten quality and safety of healthcare.

‘Nurses are patient safety critical, whether it be prevention and identifying risks, ensuring safe clinical practice or surveillance of health systems and raising concerns, it is most frequently nurses who are the most consistent healthcare professionals with patients.

‘But we also know that having the right numbers and the right skills of nurses correlates directly to the incidence of harm or risk to patients. So, when we invest in nursing, when we invest in health workforce, we are investing in patient safety.’”

About half of the world’s population do not have access to the essential health services they need, and 100 million people are pushed into poverty because of the health expenses. At the UN General Assembly this year, States and Governments reiterated the importance of person-centred approach in UHC to achieve affordable and quality health care services for all.

The health workforce is the backbone of health systems. With the global shortfall of health workers, building and retaining a skilled workforce is critical to implement UHC. Nurses constitute more than half of the global health workforce and are putting patients at the centre of their care. It is essential for governments to scale up efforts in investment in nurses. Together, nurses and patients have a bigger voice to deliver health services. Nurses and patients must be central to the development of policies and strategies at all levels.

In June 2019, at the ICN Congress in Singapore, ICN and the Saudi Patient Safety Center launched their [White paper on Nurse Staffing Levels for Patient Safety and Workforce Safety](#) which showed the close relationship between safe staffing levels and patient safety. Research suggests that investing in safe, effective and needs-based nurse staffing levels can be cost effective, promoting improvement of and preventing deterioration in patients’ health

and decrease the risk of adverse events for patients and improve clinical outcomes, and patient experience of care.

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Note to Editors

The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of more than 130 national nurses' associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

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