



Position Statement

The right to connect via information and communication technology

ICN Position

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) strongly believes that people should be able to connect with each other and to share information via information and communication technology (ICT) – fixed-telephone, mobile-cellular telephone and the Internet. ICN believes that ICT can improve access to good healthcare, address inequalities in its provision and help citizens take a more active role in healthcare.

Nurses, other healthcare workers, patients, carers and citizens increasingly rely on ICT to communicate, to manage information and to access knowledge. However, there is a significant and persistent global 'digital divide'.

ICN accepts that a poor level of access to ICT across populations disadvantages those populations.

ICN believes that nurses have a major role in advocating for person-centred care, which can be enhanced with ICT.

ICN recognises that wealth influences readiness for ICT, with a clear demarcation between high-income countries and low-income countries. However, ICN believes that clear leadership and focussed policies at global, regional, national and local levels can help to provide the infrastructure and skills needed to make ICT a reality.

ICN is working at global and regional levels to help establish priorities for ICT. ICN is working with National Nurses Associations (NNA) at national and local levels to support the implementation of ICT and to facilitate access and use, in order to improve health and the working lives of nurses.

Background

Nurses work with individuals, families and communities to promote health, to prevent illness, to restore health and to alleviate suffering¹.

Fixed-telephone subscriptions across the world are declining, yet many people are yet to be connected. Mobile telephone signals are approaching coverage of nearly 100% of the world's population, yet many people do not yet own a mobile phone. Mobile broadband subscriptions across the world are increasing, yet most of the world's population still has no Internet access at all. The proportion of Internet users ranges from nearly 100% in some countries to less than 1% in others².

¹ International Council of Nurses (2012), Code of Ethics for Nurses. Geneva: ICN.

² http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/mis2013/MIS2013_without_Annex_4.pdf.pdf

Unless there is more equity in access, the ongoing shift towards electronic communication such as SMS and email and towards the Internet as a source information and knowledge will serve to disenfranchise a large proportion of the world's population and a significant number of nurses.

Adopted in 2014

Related ICN Positions:

- Informed patients (2008)
- Nursing and development (2007)
- Use of social media (in development)

The International Council of Nurses 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 nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.