



October 2018

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES AND NURSING NOW STATEMENT

Astana Declaration on Primary Health Care: From Alma-Ata towards Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals

Comprising half of the healthcare workforce, nurses are at the core of ensuring the fundamental right to the highest attainable standard of health through universal health coverage (UHC) based on primary health care (PHC). We therefore strongly support the recommitment to PHC by the participants of the Global Conference on Primary Health Care as outlined in the Astana Declaration on Primary Health Care.

Nurses make an essential contribution to each of the components of PHC: empowering individuals, families and communities to be owners and architects of and advocates for their health; ensuring health in all policies in order to address the social determinants of health; and delivering public health and primary care throughout the life course. Nurses are the principal group of healthcare workers providing PHC across different settings and are usually the professional maintaining crucial links between individuals, families, communities and all areas of the healthcare system.

We strongly believe that political will is vital to delivering the ambitions of the Astana Declaration. We call on ministries of health, within their national context, to integrate PHC as the foundation of their health systems and ensure adequate financial investment in PHC. This includes allocating resources to the education and training of a competent health workforce, with particular emphasis on nurses and midwives, and the development and implementation of effective health technologies including medicines, that together create an enabling environment for good clinical practice for all. We also call on Heads of State and Government to engage all sectors of government to ensure health in all policies and a multi-sectoral approach.

With the right knowledge, skills, opportunities, and financial support, nurses are uniquely placed to act as effective practitioners, health coaches, spokespersons, and knowledge suppliers for patients and families throughout the life course. Nurses are an essential member of the multidisciplinary healthcare team and we wholly support the multidisciplinary approach as an

important mechanism to support PHC. Implementation of the Declaration will depend on the development of policies that promote functional multidisciplinary teams and removal of barriers to multidisciplinary working in PHC. Further to this, we encourage investment in interprofessional learning and governance and funding model that support team-based care. We recognise too that midwives are essential for the good health of women, babies and families and should be available to all who need them.

We strongly believe that the effective and safe delivery of comprehensive PHC services is dependent on the strength, capacity and capability of the health workforce and support the Declaration's commitment to ensuring an adequate public health and primary care workforce able to address modern health needs. In order to put public health and primary care at the centre of UHC, we must ensure appropriate remuneration mechanisms and financial resources to support this workforce.

The holistic people-centred models of care and ongoing community engagement in health policy decision-making that are central to PHC are consistent with nursing models of care. Nurses and midwives are vital in dealing with the problems of access within PHC, reducing health inequalities, applying a people-centred approach and managing the holistic needs of individuals, families and communities. Nurses should be able to prevent, detect and manage common conditions encountered in PHC settings and be supported to do so through policy and legislation. The nursing role is one of healthcare provider, educator, care coordinator and advocate. The scope within these roles, as reflected in increasing recognition of advanced and independent nursing practice, will continue to evolve as the health needs of individuals and communities change. When nurses are optimally utilised within PHC and practice to their full scope, evidence demonstrates that they provide effective care, achieve positive health outcomes for patients and improve patient self-management. We therefore call on governments to remove barriers that impede nurses to work to their full scope in order to achieve the vision set out in the Declaration.

We resolutely support a declaration that will deliver change and achieve UHC through PHC.

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. www.icn.ch

Nursing Now is a three-year global campaign run in collaboration with the International Council of Nurses and the World Health Organization. Nursing Now is run by a Campaign Board made up of nurses and non-nurses from 16 different countries. The campaign is a programme of the Burdett Trust for Nursing. www.nursingnow.org