

77th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia

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Agenda item 9.6 : Monitoring progress and acceleration plan for NCDs, including oral health and integrated eye care, in the South-East Asia Region (SEA/RC75/R2)

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) recognizes the growing public health challenges of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), oral health, and integrated eye care in the South-East Asia Region, where NCDs account for 62% of all deaths, including nine million annual fatalities. ICN emphasizes the critical role nurses play in preventing, detecting, and managing NCDs, as well as in improving oral and eye health.

Key recommendations include:

1. **Leveraging Nurses in NCD Prevention and Control:** Nurses, often the first point of contact for patients, are crucial in promoting healthy lifestyles and managing chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and cancer. ICN calls for greater investment in training nurses to lead integrated NCD services, especially at the primary care level, empowering them to manage chronic diseases and prevent complications.
2. **Strengthening Oral Health Care:** Oral diseases, such as dental caries and oral cancer, are major health challenges. ICN advocates for integrating oral health into NCD management and primary care services. Nurses should be trained to provide basic oral health care, promote hygiene, and detect early signs of oral cancer, particularly in underserved communities.
3. **Enhancing Eye Care Services:** With 30% of the world's blind and visually impaired population in the region, eye care is a growing priority. ICN supports incorporating eye health into primary care, enabling nurses to detect and manage vision impairments like diabetic retinopathy.

4. **Advancing Multisectoral Approaches:** ICN urges collaboration across sectors to address NCD risk factors like tobacco use and poor diets. Nurses should lead health promotion and advocate for policies that foster healthier environments.

ICN calls on Member States to adopt its recommendations, invest in the nursing workforce, and enable nurses to work to their full potential in addressing NCDs, oral, and eye health.