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Monkeypox - “Protect nurses, combat stigma” says International Council of Nurses

Geneva, Switzerland; 25 July 2022 — The International Council of Nurses (ICN) today called for protection of nurses and other healthcare workers who are caring for patients infected with the monkeypox virus. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared monkeypox a global health emergency with more than 16 thousand reported cases from 75 countries and territories, and five deaths.¹

At the frontlines of healthcare, nurses play a central role in the response to this health emergency, particularly by providing health education on prevention and infection control, as well as safeguarding against stigma and discrimination. Nurses and other healthcare workers require access to protection personal equipment (PPE) and materials in order to protect them from exposure and limit the spread of the virus. They must also have access to up-to-date information on modes of transmission, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, infection control procedures, counselling and care, through in-service or continuing education.

Dr Pamela Cipriano, ICN President, acknowledged Dr Tedros for raising the issue of monkeypox as a global health emergency and drew attention to the risk of infection amongst nurses who care for those infected with monkeypox.

“As we regrettably witnessed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses and other healthcare workers often do not have access to proper protection against infectious diseases. In order to protect our healthcare workforce and prevent the spread of this disease, training and professional guidelines are required along with PPE.

ICN urges national nursing associations to actively participate in sensitizing and educating the public about monkeypox; take measures to combat stigma and discrimination; and help secure a safe practice environment, including protective equipment and materials, that permits adequate care to people with monkeypox and ensures protection of nursing personnel from exposure to the virus.”

Howard Catton, ICN’s Chief Executive Officer, added:

“COVID-19 is far from over, and now we have a new public health emergency in the form of monkeypox. Global health must be the number one priority for all countries and investment in nursing has never been more important for the achievement of healthcare for all. Never forget that it will be our healthcare workers who will be on the frontline responding to this latest public health emergency.

Nursing care is non-discriminatory and ICN deplores the stigmatisation or marginalisation of anyone requiring healthcare. The monkeypox global health emergency once again exposes, and risks exacerbating, health inequalities.”

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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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ⁱ [WHO Director-General's statement at the press conference following IHR Emergency Committee regarding the multi-country outbreak of monkeypox - 23 July 2022](#)

