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## **“The key to transforming mental health care lies in strengthening the mental health nursing workforce.”**

### **ICN publishes new report on mental health nursing workforce**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 10 October 2022** – On World Mental Health Day, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) is delighted to announce the publication of a new report on the global mental health nursing workforce entitled [\*\*Time to Prioritize and Invest in Mental Health and Wellbeing\*\*](#).

Nurses form the largest number of providers in mental health care services (44%) across the world and are responsible for the delivery and coordination of the majority of patient care. Faced with rising demand for mental health and substance use services coupled with shortages of nurses, especially those prepared with specialized mental health skills, ICN developed a report to assist governments, policy makers, nursing associations, nursing educators, and workplaces to review and develop the mental health nursing workforce.

ICN's President, Dr Pamela Cipriano said the report provided valuable insight:

“Too many people are simply unable to get the care and support they need for mental health conditions. The erosion of mental health is considered by many as the flashpoint for the next pandemic, with one in eight people in the world living with a mental health disorder. As nurses form the largest part of the mental health workforce, the key to transforming mental health care lies in strengthening the mental health nursing workforce. It's essential to reverse the under-investment in mental health and substance use services to reduce the disease burden for individuals and restore social and economic stability that has been threatened even more through the pandemic.”

To gather the information for this seminal report, ICN, with the assistance of mental health nursing experts from across the globe, developed a survey which was completed by mental health nurses, specialist mental health organisations, ministries of health, and experts in the area of mental health across 44 low-, middle- and high-income countries with all regions represented.

Respondents to the ICN survey indicated that there are multiple reasons why there are insufficient numbers of mental health nurses, including poor planning and regulatory environments, limited incentives to pursue a career in mental health; inadequate education preparation; the lack of reward and recognition and the lingering stigma attached to mental health.

ICN estimates that there are approximately 300,000 mental health nurses across the world, but this varies vastly across regions, ranging from just 0.9 mental health nurse per 100,000 population in Africa to 25.2 per 100,000 in Europe. The ICN report provides an analysis of the mental health nursing workforce and looks at ways to build the workforce, including educational preparation, retention and recruitment, and the role of advanced practice nurses and the prescriptive authority for nurses in mental health.

The report concludes that if mental health needs are to be addressed appropriately, there needs to be targeted strategies, plans and investment in the mental health nursing workforce. ICN strongly advocates for the investment of further education and professional development in mental health nursing in order to support individuals and communities achieve the highest attainable standard of physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

The ICN report out today builds on the World Health Organization's [\*World Mental Health Report: Transforming mental health for all\*](#), which highlighted persistent workforce shortages as one of the major challenges preventing effective action in mental health programmes. There are simply not enough health care professionals to meet demand across the continuum of care which includes prevention, promotion, treatment and rehabilitation of mental health and wellbeing.

Last week at the launch event for the WISH/WHO Report *Our duty of care: A global call to action to protect the mental health of health and care workers*, ICN CEO Howard Catton who advised on the report, [said](#) the case for investment in nurses was being undermined by governments continuing to undervalue nurses.

ICN is also backing today's launch of The Lancet Commission on Stigma and Discrimination in Mental Health report which confirms the findings of ICN's own report that stigma and discrimination in the health care professions have been worsened by the COVID Effect and require urgent attention.

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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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