



ICN Student Assembly 2021 – Inspirational young nurse leaders ready to shape future healthcare systems

Geneva, 25 October 2021 - Around 500 nursing students from around the world met virtually over the weekend at the International Council of Nurses' (ICN) biennial Student Assembly, ahead of the ICN Congress what will be held on 2-4 November 2021. The Assembly is designed to provide a forum for nursing students and those in the early stages of their careers to have a voice and to contribute and influence the future of nursing through ICN. Most importantly, the Assembly is run by students for students, and this year had 20 student speakers from 18 countries in the programme.

The meeting, held in two sessions to accommodate people in different times zones, covered a wide range of topics of vital interest to nurses at the beginning of their careers, including how nursing students have coped during the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health issues and their role as leaders now and in the future.

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said discussions held at the Assembly would be of vital importance to the future of the profession. "As we come to terms with the pandemic and think about the future of healthcare, the world is also thinking about the health of this planet. Young people are emerging not only as influential, but as some of the leading voices. All of our National Nursing Associations will be looking in eagerly to find out the outcomes from the Student Assembly discussions and the direction you are leading to in the future."

ICN Chief Nurse Michelle Acorn welcomed delegates and stressed the importance of nurse education as one of the most important aspects highlighted in the WHO/ICN State of the World's Nursing Report. "My wish for you is to develop a passion for learning in your profession to grow, flourish and share your knowledge with others. You are our futures, our leaders, and we thank you for your service, care, compassion and expertise."

During the Assembly, nursing students spoke of their panic and distress at how the pandemic had brought them into the frontline of services prematurely, and how they had to build resilience and find mentors who were able to support them during a very difficult time.

But many students also experienced personal growth and were able to have more flexible access to their learning modules as distance learning became the norm.

Delegates discussed numerous ways to deal with stress and anxiety and shared their own experiences of using a variety of coping mechanisms, including not being too hard on themselves and taking time out when they needed to.

There was an emphasis on the importance of teamwork as a way of getting the job done, but also as a way of handling stress and building relationships with supportive groups of colleagues.

A key take-away message for students was to take care of themselves as a priority so that they are then more able to take care of others.

Closing the Assembly, ICN Senior Policy Advisor Erica Burton thanked the members of the ICN Nursing Student Steering Group and other key participants and said: “I have been so incredibly inspired by your dedication to the profession, your professionalism, the way you come together as a village to solve problems, but mostly by your passion to create a healthier, safer and more inclusive world that we all want for our future.”

President of the Emirates Nursing Association Aysha Al Mahri thanked the organisers for such a successful Assembly and for promoting the interests of nursing students worldwide. Ms Al Mahri said: “You are the next generation of healthcare professionals who will play an important role in shaping healthcare and the nursing profession’s future. Some of you will be nursing leaders in a few years, leading the change and supporting innovation. It is now time to work together and speak with one voice and one vision for a brighter future for the nursing profession worldwide.”

ICN thanks the students from the Emirates Nursing Association for all their hard work in making the assembly so successful.

ICN’s 2021 Congress takes place virtually on 2-4 November. For more information and to register go to : <https://icncongress2021.org/>

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