Cuts to Health Care Endanger Society

1. Nurse leaders from nine countries¹ gathered in Dublin, Ireland, 23-25 September 2013 for the 19th International Council of Nurses Workforce Forum to deliberate on common trends affecting nurses’ capacity to deliver safe and effective patient care. Issues discussed included safe staffing levels, the 24/7 work environment within the continuum of care and the economic value of nurses to society.²

2. In a time of global financial uncertainty, the Forum reaffirmed that nurses are key contributors to society through cost-effective planning and delivery of quality assured health care services in all settings. Appropriate use of nursing staff has benefits for, and is an investment in, every society and all economies. Better health, better care, better value for all should be every government’s goal.³ ⁴

3. The Forum calls on governments and employers to protect our communities by providing safe nurse staffing levels in order to ensure quality assured patient outcomes.⁵ It is essential that governments utilise the nurses available to them to their full potential. The Francis Report, U.K., highlighted the link between the presence of highly skilled competent nurses and improved patient safety.⁶

4. Forum delegates expressed growing concerns about the impacts of budget cuts, staffing moratoriums and the erosion of workplace conditions on patient and worker safety. We call on all governments to make evidence based decisions ensuring required nursing numbers in order to secure desired patient outcomes and safe working practices.⁷

5. The Forum calls on nurse leaders to speak out and take action in the interest of patients and nursing care. Health care leaders should utilise international studies which identify the benefits of nurse leadership to health care systems and improved patient outcomes⁸.

6. Delegates at the Forum were unanimous in calling on nurses, as direct care experts, to draw attention to unsafe working conditions and other barriers to safe care.⁹

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¹ Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Sweden, United States of America
² Duffield, C.M., Diers, D., O'Brien-Pallas, L., Aisbett, C., Roche, M.A., King, M.T., Aisbett, K. (2011, vol.24, issue 4 page 244-255) Nursing staffing, nursing workload, the work environment and patient outcomes. Applied Nursing Research
³ IHI Triple Aim Framework
⁴ WHO Health for All
⁵ The nurse is a person who has completed a program of basic, generalised nursing education and is authorised by the appropriate regulatory authority to practice nursing in his/her country. Basic nursing education is a formally recognised program of study providing a broad and sound foundation in the behavioural, life, and nursing sciences for the general practice of nursing, for a leadership role, and for post-basic education for specialty or advanced nursing practice. The nurse is prepared and authorised (1) to engage in the general scope of nursing practice, including the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and care of physically ill, mentally ill, and disabled people of all ages and in all health care and other community settings; (2) to carry out health care teaching; (3) to participate fully
as a member of the health care team; (4) to supervise and train nursing and health care auxiliaries; and (5) to be involved in research. (ICN, 1987) Geneva.


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