



Position Statement

Management of nursing and health care services

ICN Position:

Nursing has a responsibility to contribute to health planning and policy, and to the coordination and management of health services. The International Council of Nurses (ICN) expects nurses to contribute to health policy locally, nationally and internationally through management and leadership roles at all levels and through direct engagement and advocacy by National Nursing Associations (NNAs). The need for excellence in management of nursing and health systems must be actively promoted.

ICN firmly believes that nursing services must be directly managed by nurses. In a situation where there are non-nurse managers whose staff includes nurses, ICN believes that nurse leaders in these situations must have authority to give direction on matters pertaining to professional nursing. In all such situations it is the nurse who is accountable for the scope and standards of nursing practice.

In addition, ICN believes that nurses are well equipped to manage a wide range of health services.

ICN expects nurse managers to receive equal opportunity, preparation and remuneration for management, policy development and leadership as do other health personnel being prepared for senior positions in the health sector.

Background:

The roles and functions of nurse managers are continually being re-defined in the context of health sector change.

Leadership is an essential component of management. It is critical that nurse leaders are well prepared to assume roles as managers in nursing and health care services, in education or in health policy. Nursing leadership includes coaching and mentoring others, and creating the environment for ongoing development and quality care.

Strong nursing leaders support staff in their practice by addressing both professional and clinical issues, promoting job satisfaction and improving the quality of care for health consumers. Specifically, nurses at executive levels play an integral role in the delivery of quality care by providing: strong and effective leadership; social influence; strategic direction; and, authority within an organisation.¹

Excellence in the management of nursing and health care services must be actively promoted. Professional nurses associations can strategically influence to ensure that the profession is engaged in health planning and policy.

¹ Cook M.J. 2001. The attributes of effective clinical nurse leaders. Nursing Standard, 15(35), 33-36.

Maintaining networks and linkages with and between key stakeholders is essential to effective leadership and management. Also critical is the ability to continually assess the environment, to monitor performance and to create or adapt to change as required.

Educational preparation for management will vary according to the roles and career paths of nurse managers. ICN has a role in promoting sound education for management and leadership. Professional nursing associations can assist by identifying relevant opportunities and promoting these to their members. Individual nurses must take responsibility for their own education, and develop the ability to plan and manage this strategically.

Nurses need to select appropriate uni- or multi-disciplinary programmes to prepare them effectively for management, policy development and leadership in different settings and at different stages of their professional and career development. Preparation should reflect the importance of continuous learning that is adapted to changing needs and expectations. It should include emphasis on the development of relevant skills and attributes, not just the acquisition of knowledge.

Achievements of nurse managers need to be rewarded in the same ways as other managers. At the same time nurse managers need to demonstrate the benefits of their inclusion in key positions. Appropriate position classifications, equal to other managers at the same level and according to their professional attributes and their level of responsibility, should apply to nurse managers.

Adopted in 2000

Reviewed and revised in 2010

Related ICN Positions:

- Participation of Nurses in Health Services Decision Making and Policy Development
- Promoting the value and Cost-effectiveness of Nursing
- Publicly Funded Accessible Health Services
- Health Human Resources Development (HHRD)

Related ICN Publications:

- Career Planning and Development—It's Your Career: Take Charge and Trainer's Kit (2010). ICN: Geneva, Switzerland.
- Health Policy Package (HPP) - A Guide for Policy Development (2005). ICN: Geneva, Switzerland.
- Globalisation and Health System Reform: Implications and Strategies for Nursing. Shaw, S. (2004). ICN: Geneva, Switzerland
- The Global Shortage of Registered Nurses: An Overview of Issues and Actions (2004). ICN: Geneva, Switzerland.

The International Council of Nurses 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 nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.