Reducing travel-related communicable disease transmission

ICN Position:

Nurses, by virtue of their competencies, diverse work settings and sheer numbers are uniquely positioned to assist governments and other agencies to plan, implement and evaluate programmes aimed at minimising travel-related communicable disease transmission.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) supports the efforts of nurses and national nurses associations (NNAs) to:

- Secure nursing representation on international, national, regional and local bodies concerned with travel-related communicable diseases and with national disease outbreak alert and response.
- Become involved in planning strategies from early stages through to evaluation of the system for effective surveillance, early detection, and treatment of communicable diseases, particularly those that present an international public health risk.
- Alert nurses and the general public to the increased risk of communicable disease transmission due to international travel as well as to infection control measures, including respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette and immunisations.
- Promote national awareness of legislation and quarantine measures related to international health regulations and travel.
- Promote the inclusion of relevant information on public health, including epidemiology and the prevention, control and management of infectious diseases in basic, post-basic and continuing nursing education programmes.
- Lobby to ensure that measures to control and prevent disease transmission shall be based on access, equity and respect for the dignity and human rights of people.

Background:

The WHO International Health Regulations (IHR)\(^1\) is an international legal instrument that aims to prevent and respond to acute public health risks that have the potential to cross borders and threaten people worldwide.

\(^1\) International Health Regulations (2005), second edition. WHO. www.who.int/ihr/
Travel, particularly international travel, continues to increase at a rapid rate in terms of the numbers of travellers, the variety of age groups, socio-economic backgrounds and countries of origin. In a globalised world, diseases can spread across borders far and wide via international travel and trade. The risk of communicable disease transmission associated with population movement has significant implications for individuals, groups and communities and for health care systems, as well as for social and economic development.

Nurses are well placed to provide advice on travel-related communicable disease risk reduction, policy and programme development.

Adopted in 1999
Reviewed and revised in 2006 and 2011

Previously: Nurses’ responsibilities regarding the risk of disease transmission due to increased international travel, adopted in 1979

Related ICN Positions:

- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

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.