Health human resources development (HHRD)

ICN Position:

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) judges that health human resources development (HHRD) - planning, management and development - requires an interdisciplinary, inter-sectoral and multi-service approach. This recognises the complementary roles of health service providers, and values the contribution of the different disciplines. Inputs are required from the key stake holders -- consumers, service providers, educators, researchers, employers, managers, governments, funders and health professions' organisations. Similarly, ICN acknowledges that integrated and comprehensive health human resources information systems and planning models as well as effective human resources management practices are desired outcomes of this consulting process.

Patient need should determine the categories of health personnel and skill pools required to provide care. When new categories of health workers are created or role changes are introduced, the possible consequences on national and local health human resources, career structures, and patient and community outcomes need to be identified and planned for at the outset. These would include financing arrangements and organisational impacts. Planning for this should take account of:

- Health care needs and priorities.
- Available competencies within the health care provider pool, including competencies shared by more that one health care provider group.
- Initial skills set development.
- Skill changes, such as new and advanced roles for nurses.
- Educational implications of making changes to roles and scopes of practice, including provision for life-long learning programmes.
- Appropriate and accessible supervision and mentoring programmes.
- Quality and effectiveness factors, when deciding the scope of practice of nurses and others.
- Equity as a basic value of the health system.
- Consequences for service organisation, management, delivery and financing.
- Work environment and conditions of nurses and other health care personnel.
- Regulatory implications.

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Impact on responsibilities of those workers already in the health care system.

Effect on the career pathways for existing health care workers and career structures available for new types of health workers.

For effective participation of nursing in HHRD, the core scope of nursing needs to be identified and fully articulated. This will minimise duplication and overlap between the work of nurses and other health care providers. ICN considers that the nursing profession needs to be a leader of change, continually reappraise the consequences of planned and unplanned health service changes on nursing, nurses and patient outcomes. Continuing evaluation of and research into the contribution of nursing to health care should form an important part of HHRD processes. This should include data from evidence-based practice, informing future decision-making.

National nurses associations (NNAs) and other nursing organisations need to:

- Identify critical issues related to the supply of and demand for nursing personnel, including factors that influence recruitment, retention and motivation.
- Ensure involvement of nurses in policy, decision-making, planning, management and monitoring at all levels of HHRD. Nurses should participate in interdisciplinary reviews of the roles of different types of health workers, research and evaluation studies, and in decision-making with respect to the functions of existing and new categories of health care providers.
- Assist nurses to acquire and improve research skills, to carry out research, and to use research findings as a basis for decision-making in HHRD.
- Engage in public debate on appropriate responses to demand for health services.
- Promote the development of quality practice environments, including opportunities for professional growth and development and fair reward systems as a positive feature of recruitment and retention programmes.
- Acknowledge and reflect the cultural diversity of society in Health Human Resources Development.
- Promote capacity building in the area of health sector human resources management, including nurses working at senior and executive levels.
- Assist in the development of a humane approach to HHRD.
- Offer an inter-disciplinary analysis and develop effective interventions to address health needs.

Nurses need to be aware of and utilise HR services in their workplaces. HHRD policies need to encompass education, regulation and practice factors.

HHRD policies need to focus on self-sustainability, guaranteeing a core of health professionals in adequate numbers and with the right skills, capable of meeting the health needs of the target population.
Background

The attainment of the highest possible level of health in a country depends, to a substantial degree, on the availability of sufficient appropriately prepared and distributed health personnel, capable of providing quality cost-effective services. The goal of HHRD is to ensure that the right quality, quantity, mix and distribution of health personnel are available to meet health care needs in an environment that supports effective and safe practice. Some of the factors influencing decisions about numbers, types and distribution of health care providers include:

- Advances in health science and technology, altered patterns in the delivery of health care in hospitals and in the community, demographic changes and the emergence of patterns of disease.

- The growing public awareness of the availability of health services, resulting in greater demand for services.

- Increased health care costs, limited resources for health often necessitating a continual review of priorities, and the creation of new categories of health care providers.

- Labour laws, professional regulatory requirements, civil service rules and regulations, human resources and national health and development policies.

- Gender and cultural factors.

- Changing health risks.

- Access to and level of education.

- Culture and health beliefs.

- Access to alternative medicine.

- Intergenerational factors.

- Organisational factors.

- Socio-economic, financial constraints.

- The local, national and global labour market globalization.

Nurses need to engage in the activities and lobbying efforts of their professional associations and unions.
Adopted in 1999
Reviewed and revised in 2007


Related ICN Positions:
- Scope of Nursing Practice
- Nursing Regulation
- The Protection of the Title “Nurse”
- Assistive or Support Nursing Personnel
- Socio-economic Welfare of Nurses
- Career Development in Nursing
- Nurse Retention, Transfer and Migration

ICN Publications:
- It’s Your Career: Take Charge Career Planning and Development (2001)

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.