



World Patient Safety Day: Support the nursing workforce to deliver safe and respectful childbirth!

Geneva, Switzerland, 17 September 2021 – On World Patient Safety Day 2021, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the Council of International Neonatal Nurses, Inc. (COINN) have called on all stakeholders to take sustainable actions that support the nursing workforce to deliver safe and respectful care, and to reduce avoidable harm to mothers and new-borns.

Globally, maternal and newborn mortality from preventable causes remains high, particularly in low-resource settings. Highly skilled nurses working in supportive environments are key to ensuring the delivery of safe, high-quality care and to preventing avoidable risks and harm. Nurses play an integral role in providing and advocating for best practices for safe and effective care that meet the health, emotional and social needs of the newborn, mother and family. Safe and supportive working environments for nurses must be a priority for patient safety.

Annette Kennedy, ICN's President said:

“Patient safety and safe staffing go hand in hand, particularly for maternal and newborn care, yet in many low-resource settings, a lack of safe staffing puts mothers, new-borns and nurses at risk. One of the seven strategic objectives of the recent [WHO Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021-2030](#) is to ‘*inspire, educate, skill and protect every health worker to contribute to the design and delivery of safe care systems*’. To that end, ICN is calling for nurses to be considered as integral to the development of policies and strategies at all levels in order to foster a safe work environment built on mutual respect and shared decision-making.”

Dr Carole Kenner, Chief Executive Officer of COINN said:

“Patient safety and nurses are inextricably linked. This ICN-COINN joint statement illustrates the key areas that we must work on if patient safety and quality of care are to be achieved!”

The WHO Patient Safety Flagship Programme launched the [Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021-2030](#) on 4 August 2021. The Action Plan is a roadmap towards a vision of a world where no one is harmed in healthcare and all patients receive safe and respectful care. The report states that *'available evidence suggests that 134 million adverse events due to unsafe care occur in hospitals in low- and middle-income countries, contributing to around 2.6 million deaths every year'* and that *"the social cost of patient harm can be valued at US\$ 1 trillion to 2 trillion a year."*

ICN and COINN have called for six actions to be prioritised:

1. Develop standardised orientation and training for nurses to care for mothers and, anticipating complications, that include care for the small and sick newborn.
2. Develop, implement and evaluate safe staffing systems and processes that account for not only the number of mother/baby dyads or small and sick new-borns, but their acuity level and the skill mix of healthcare workers.
3. Address underlying causes of gender inequity and tackle gender bias and power imbalances which undermine the nursing voice and participation in decision-making.
4. Develop leadership capacity to eliminate avoidable harm in healthcare.
5. Call for zero separation of mothers and their new-borns.
6. Recognise families as recipients of care and empower them to be active participants and partners in care.

See the joint statement by ICN and COINN [here](#).

More information about the 2021 World Patient Safety Day campaign can be found [here](#).

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Note to Editors

The **International Council of Nurses** (ICN) 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 care for all and sound health policies globally.

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