



72nd WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

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Universal health coverage: Primary health care towards universal health coverage

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the over 20 million nurses worldwide.

ICN and the nursing profession has for a long time firmly believed that strengthening primary health care (PHC) is the most effective approach to ensuring universal health coverage (UHC). As outlined in our 2019 International Nurses' Day resource, now more than ever the nursing workforce is equipped to ensure successful implementation of PHC approaches and are at the center of ensuring health for all.

Nurses are the principal group of healthcare workers providing PHC across different settings as care providers, educators, coordinators and advocates. The scope within these roles continues to evolve as the health needs of individuals and communities change. ICN urges governments to remove barriers that impede nurses from working to their full scope of practice thereby optimising the contribution of the largest group of healthcare providers in the health workforce.

The holistic people-centred models of care and ongoing community engagement in health policy decision-making that are central to PHC are consistent with nursing models of care. Nurses are vital to improving access within PHC, reducing health inequalities, applying a people-centred approach and managing the holistic needs of individuals, families and communities. Nurses should be supported through policy and legislation to prevent, detect and manage common conditions encountered in PHC settings.

We strongly believe that effective and safe delivery of comprehensive PHC services is dependent on the strength, capacity and capability of the health workforce. We call on governments to invest in quality education, recruitment and retention strategies and assurance of decent work and fair pay.

ICN is committed to working with its stakeholders and WHO to transform the PHC vision into action.

Thank you.