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## GLOBAL HEALTH PROFESSIONS URGE ACTION ON H1N1 PANDEMIC

**Geneva, Switzerland, 31 August 2009** – A call to action to prepare for an H1N1 pandemic at a country and community level has been issued by the World Health Professions Alliance.

The WHPA, a body that brings together more than 23 million health care professionals worldwide, has endorsed a call to action and a set of key principles to promote operational activities that can be implemented at the country level in response to the continued spread of the H1N1 pandemic. The principles have been developed by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. They are meant to reemphasize some key interventions and directly complement current World Health Organization technical guidance and National Pandemic Influenza plans.

The Alliance, which unites dentistry, medicine, nursing, and pharmacy through their representative international organisations, the International Council of Nurses, the International Pharmaceutical Federation, the World Dental Federation and the World Medical Association, says these interventions are designed to strengthen and build on existing systems at country level and they call on all partners to integrate these into ongoing programmes.

The priority actions are based on the need for all countries to plan for the worst. The document says that the future evolution of the pandemic cannot be predicted, but worldwide the overwhelming majority of cases are experiencing only mild symptoms. However, some people, such as pregnant women and people with underlying medical conditions, are at greater risk. And it warns that the impact of the pandemic is more severe in those countries with weak health systems.

The document calls on countries to identify and prioritise high risk groups, to train health workers to identify symptoms, increase stocks of medical supplies and to educate the community about home care. It also says that target groups to receive the first doses of vaccination need to be identified and plans should be drawn up for mass vaccination when the vaccine is available.

In a joint statement to mark the call to action, the WHPA says: 'This "Call to Action" marks an important step in the ongoing and future response to the pandemic (H1N1) and it underscores the critical importance of UN agencies, civil society, NGOs and international bodies working together to ensure countries, particularly those in resource-constrained settings, are prepared to respond to the pandemic and the potential impacts it may have on populations.' The full text of the 'Call to Action' can be found at: [www.whpa.org/Call\\_to\\_action-EN\\_17aug.pdf](http://www.whpa.org/Call_to_action-EN_17aug.pdf)

***The WHPA was formed between ICN, FDI and WMA in 1999 as a unique alliance to address global health issues, with the secretariat being run from the ICN. The Alliance was pleased to welcome FDI in 2005. The aim of the organisation is to facilitate collaboration between key health professionals and major international stakeholders such as governments, policy makers and the World Health Organization. The Alliance operates under the philosophy that by working in collaboration, instead of along parallel tracks, the patient and health care system benefit***

#### **Editor's Note**

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 since 1899, ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.

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ICN/09 PR#22