



SEW NEWS

International Council of Nurses • Conseil international des infirmières • Consejo internacional de enfermeras

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NNA SUPPORT NURSES AGAINST PHYSICIAN

The American Nurses Association (ANA) has joined forces with the Texas Nurses Association (TNA) to strongly condemn a recent indictment and prosecution of two registered nurses in Winkler County in Texas. The two nurses have been charged of violating the law by sending a letter to the Texas Medical Board where they expressed concern about a physician at the hospital. The County Attorney's Office has indicted them for misuse of official information although their report against the physician included only patient case numbers and not patient names to preserve their confidentiality. Misuse of governmental information is a third degree felony and carries penalties of 2 to 10 years imprisonment and a maximum fine of 10,000 US dollars. Both nurses, who have been employed by the hospital for over 20 years, have been suspended from their positions.

The President of the ANA, Rebecca Patton, has pointed out that in filing a complaint against this physician, the two nurses acted according to the Nurse's Code of Ethics which states that it is their responsibility to advocate for the health and safety of their patients. This issue has raised a strong movement of solidarity

in support of these two nurses. The TNA has set up a Legal Defence Fund and is expecting to collect more than 10,000 USD for the defence of these two victims strongly supported by their colleagues and the nursing community at large.

Source: CBS NEWS- July 09

15 % INCREASE IN NURSES' SALARIES IN CZECH REPUBLIC

As of 1 July 2009 nurses' salaries in the Czech Republic have been increased by 15%. This measure has been taken by Government to address the serious nursing shortage exacerbated by the international migration of registered nurses to higher income countries within Europe. The Ministry of Health set up a team of experts from the NNA, Hospitals Association and Health Insurance Companies to look into the following incentives to neutralise the push factors affecting nurses:

- increase in salaries
- improvement in conditions of work
- continuous education and training
- recognition of the profession

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In addition to a salary increase for nurses of all grades, a budget of over 10 million Euros has been earmarked to support advanced nursing education and training. A public celebration of International Nurses Day has been organised with the support of the Ministry of Health in recognition of the immense contribution of nurses in the health sector.

Source: Veronika Di-Cara, Secretary, Czech Association of Nurses May 09

DOMINICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION DISAGREES ON MIGRATION PLAN

The Dominican Nurses Association (DNA) has expressed serious concern about a Government project to export nurses to the Island of Barbados. According to the Association the problem of nursing shortage has always been a priority and the NNA has been lobbying and negotiating for a long time with the Ministry of Health to redress this situation. It is only recently that there has been improvement due to regular recruitment and training of nursing students. However, there are still many posts that have not been filled and nurses' promotions or career advancement have not been reviewed in spite of the extension and expansion of services at primary, secondary and tertiary level.

The President of the NNA has made a request to Government to improve staffing levels in the country which are far below international norms, before considering exporting nurses to Barbados.

Source: Dominican News Online.com

HEALTH MINISTER OF SWAZILAND PLEADED IN FAVOUR OF NURSES

Addressing a nursing gathering on the occasion of the celebration of International Nurses Day on 12 May 2009, the Minister of Health of Swaziland Benedict Xaba stated that one of the reasons that nurses are migrating to "greener pastures" is because their career path has been neglected for too long, leading to frustration and demotivation. He announced that it is a priority for his Ministry to redress this situation urgently as the strength of any health system is derived from a strong and motivated nursing workforce. He considered nurses as the backbone of the health services on account of their strength as the largest health care providers and also due to their advanced clinical competence.

The Minister acknowledged that there is considerable delay in recruiting new nurses that have already graduated because of red tape in the recruitment process of civil servants. He promised that with the setting up of the National

Health Service Commission things will move very fast. In his closing remarks he paid tribute to the visionary leadership of ICN and the Swaziland Nurses Association for their initiatives in the setting up of Wellness Centres in the country which are offering a range of services to nurses and their families such as HIV testing, counselling and treatment among others.

Source: The Swazi Observer, June 09

CANADIAN NURSES ARE EXHAUSTED

A survey conducted by the Canadian Nurses Association revealed that many nurses in Canada are exhausted from lack of staff, heavy workload and overtime work. Consequently, the rate of absenteeism has gone up due to sick and injury leave. It is reported that in 2007 there was a shortage of 11,000 registered nurses and if remedial actions are not taken it will reach 60,000 by 2022. In 2008 around 21,500 nurses in the public sector were absent from work every week due to illness or injury. This is equivalent to 14 days work per year for each nurse and represents an increase of 21% compared to 2005. Nurses across the country performed 21,560,100 hours of overtime in 2008 amounting to 879 million Canadian dollars. Commenting on this situation at the Annual General Assembly, the President of the Federation of Nurses Unions of Canada, Linda Silas, stated that nurses are retiring at an early age as a result of this stressful working environment.

*Source: «Les infirmières sont épuisées»
Gabrielle Duchaine, Rue Frontenac, June 09*

NURSES IN PARAGUAY LOOKING FOR EMPLOYMENT IN ITALY

Recruited by an Italian company, more than 300 registered nurses have left Paraguay to work in Italy. According to the President of the NNA, Maria Chavez, most nurses left the country to look for better salaries and conditions of service that will help them to improve their socio-economic welfare and that of their families by sending remittances home. In Paraguay a nurse with 20 years' experience and a Masters degree earns around 450 Euros per month while in Italy she will earn between 1800 to 2000 Euros. The Ministry of Health has adopted a series of measures to curb the exodus which is seriously affecting the quality of care particularly in specialised areas such as Intensive Care Units and paediatrics among others. Migration has also affected the families of many nurses. As pointed out by the President of the NNA, most nurses were married women and in some cases, their marriages broke up after they left, in others,

the children were separated from their mothers. Paraguay has a ratio of one nurse for 5000 inhabitants while some neighbouring countries have a ratio of 1 to 500.

Source: Inter Press Service, Latin America, March 09

HEALTH CARE INFORMATION FOR ALL BY 2015

This year, the Health Care Information for All by 2015 campaign will focus on the information needs of nurses and midwives. The main challenge is to find ways and means to bring together thousands of nurses, midwives, publishers and librarians so as to work out strategies that will render key and essential information accessible to nurses especially in developing countries and those working in very remote areas. The campaign is supported by many health organisations such as ICN, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Royal College of Nursing, the International Confederation of Midwives and British Medical Associations. The coordinator of the project, Neil Pakenham-Walsh, has appealed to governments and funding agencies to support this project so that people do not die merely because of lack of basic health information. The CEO of ICN, David Benton, highlighted that lack of accurate and updated health information is a serious threat to quality care and patient safety. He stated that ICN is committed to addressing this issue and has already initiated concrete actions through the distribution of Merck's Manuals and setting up of mobile libraries in many developing countries.

Source: News from WHO & Partners, GHWA News, February 09

EXPERT GROUP TO REVIEW NURSES ROLES

A commission of experts chaired by the UK Minister of Health Ann Keen, a former nurse, has been set up to advise the Government of England on the future roles of nurses and midwives. It will examine a broader and central role of nurses to boost patient safety and improve quality care. The Commission will also consider how nurses could be given more freedom to commission and run their own services. The General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, Dr Peter Carter, has welcomed this initiative and considers it a recognition of the important roles played by nurses who are in close contact with patients and know exactly what is needed to deliver high quality care and meet patient's expectations. The Commission will provide a much needed way of harvesting the wealth of ideas and experiences that these nursing experts bring to the profession.

Source: "Expert group to review nurse role", BBC News, 10 May 09

H1N1 VACCINES – NURSES TO HAVE PRIORITY

The WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunization has conceded that the H1N1 virus is unstoppable and has given the green light to drug makers to manufacture vaccines against this pandemic influenza. The committee has also recommended that nurses, doctors and laboratory technicians have priority for immunization in all countries so as to preserve a functional health system as the virus evolves. After that each country can decide who the most vulnerable groups are based on the virus' unusual behaviour.

Since the detection of the virus in April this year more than 40,000 cases have been confirmed worldwide in 88 countries with 167 deaths. The number of cases is escalating at an alarming speed. According to WHO as many as two billion people could be infected worldwide in the next two years if the vaccine is ineffective, representing almost a third of the world population – a situation that will exert considerable pressure on the nursing profession as front line workers and also as the largest category of health care providers. In an article published in the *Nursing Times* in August 2009 many nurses have expressed concern on the vaccine fearing that sufficient trials have not been effected to guarantee its safety. Around 30% of 1500 nurses interviewed said they would refuse vaccination.

Sources: Reuters July 09; "Questions remain in H1N1 vaccine distribution", Los Angeles Times June 09; "Pandemic vaccine priority for most at risk", Nursing Times August 09

ASSAULT AGAINST NURSES – A FELONY WITH TWO YEARS IMPRISONMENT

Governor Brad Henry of Oklahoma, USA has signed into law in May this year, with immediate effect, a measure making assault against nurses, doctors and paramedics a felony punishable up to two years in jail and a fine of 1000 US dollars. This measure was highly welcomed by many stakeholders of the health sector. Mary Johnson, Executive Director of St Francis Hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma, said that this will add a layer of protection to nurses working in high risk conditions such as the Accident and Emergency Department, psychiatric units and in nursing homes. According to the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, the health care sector leads all other industries in workplace violence with 45% of all assaults against workers. Oklahoma is among 16 US States that have introduced measures to

protect health care workers against violence. ICN together with WHO, the International Labour Organisation and Public Services International (PSI) have produced a training manual on workplace violence and has recently conducted a series of workshops in five African countries to address this issue as reported in the SEW News of April 2009.

Sources: American Nurses Association, Smart Brief News, August 09

FROZEN PROMOTION FOR NURSES IN SEYCHELLES

For the past four years many promotions especially in the grades of senior staff nurse and nursing officer have been frozen in the Republic of Seychelles due to economic constraints – a situation that has seriously affected the morale of many nurses. Some experienced nurses have already emigrated while others have left nursing for other better paid jobs. The last review of the scheme of service for nurses was undertaken in 2006 with additional increments and allowances for those working on shift in hospitals. However nurses in the community were frustrated as they were not included in the revision. The President of the Seychelles Nurses Association, Suzanne Hoarau, said she is hoping things will get better with the appointment of a new Chief Nursing Officer and a meeting that has been fixed with the CEO of the Ministry of Health to discuss salaries and welfare of nurses.

Sources: News from the Seychelles Nurses Association, August 09

NURSES ARE STRESSED WORLDWIDE

The global nursing shortage, coupled with heavy workloads and negative working environments, has given rise to a lot of stress and depression among nurses in developing and industrialised countries. According to research conducted by Dr Naomi Swanson, the most common causes of stress among nurses are inadequate staffing levels, long working hours, shift work, exposure to hazardous substances and role ambiguity. Nurses quite often placed the care of their patients as top priority neglecting their own health.

In an article published in the *Nursing Times* in April 2009 it is revealed that staff of the UK National Health Service (NHS) are almost four times more likely to be absent from work due to stress, with nurses heading the list. According to this survey 15 % of sick leave taken in 2008 by 30,000 NHS staff were related to stress and associated psychiatric problems as opposed to only 4 % of staff working in other occupations. The Positive Practice Environment (PPE) campaign has been launched by ICN in collaboration with other international health organisations to create a conducive working environment and ultimately reduce stress among health workers. Four countries, namely Morocco, Taiwan, Uganda and Zambia are implementing the PPE campaign. For further information on the campaign visit www.ichrn.org

Sources: "NHS stress driving up nurse sick leave levels", Nursing Times, April 09; ICN PPE Campaign

The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of 133 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

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