

MEETING TODAY'S GLOBAL HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES

THE ICN VISION



by Christine Hancock

Each ICN president selects a watch word as a theme for their presidency. I chose “Care” because I believe it is their essence of nursing. Caring contributes directly to our quality of life, and indeed

our survival. Caring means fighting poverty, promoting social justice, and ensuring that all men, women, and children have access to basic health services. Through caring, we understand how to treat complex conditions, communicate effectively with patients and families, advocate for our patients and ourselves, and work efficiently either independently or within the multidisciplinary health care team.

Today's global challenges can be daunting. Between war, poverty, homelessness, HIV/AIDS, natural and man-made disasters, and threats of terrorism, we as nurses and nursing students have our work cut out for us. Many countries, for example, are overwhelmed by the disastrous impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

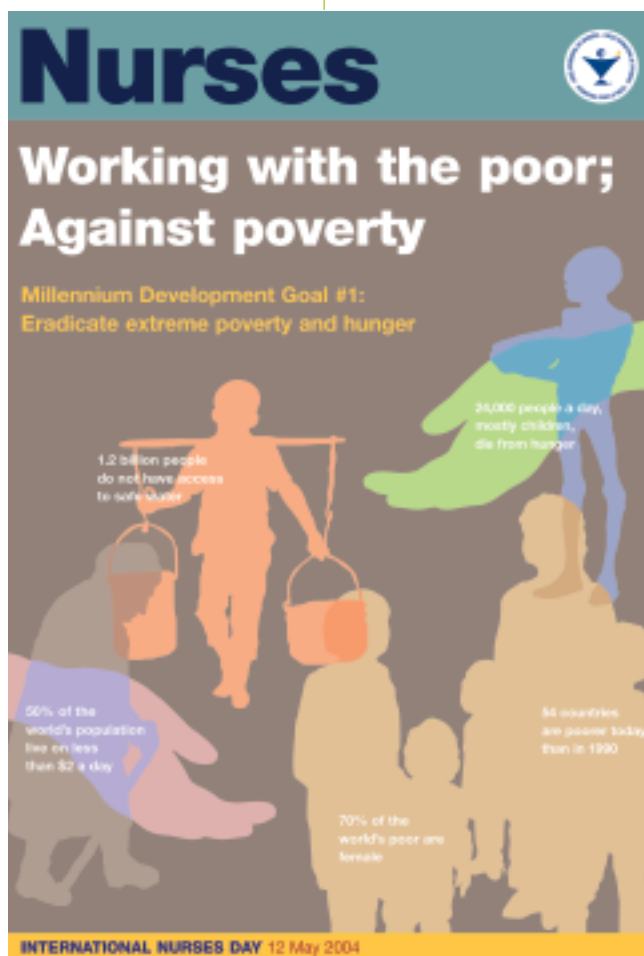
It doesn't help that there is a global nursing shortage. Many of our colleagues work in extremely difficult conditions and are stressed and overworked.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed and discouraged, and yet, I am optimistic. I believe the state of our world will improve, and that our profession has a bright future. I am optimistic because of you: nursing students committed to making the world a better place. We should consider ourselves lucky, because we know our job is

worth doing and that we can see it in the faces of our patients. We are also enjoying an increasing level of trust and confidence, as the public, the government, and the media, recognize how vital nurses are to world health.

As we face the health care challenges of the 21st century, it is nurses who will make the difference, because they understand caring.

In 1999, in celebration of its centennial, the ICN launched a global vision for itself and professional nursing in the 21st century: *to lead our societies to better health*. How do we do this? By creating a strong, united voice for nursing and developing the leadership skills to make our voice heard. Strong national nurses' organizations are among the greatest assets for nurses in any country. I encourage student nurses and new graduates to join your national nurses association.



The ICN Campaign for International Nurses Day May 12, 2004

Strong nursing leadership is critical if we are to make our vision for the future become a reality. That is why the ICN is focused on equipping nurses with the knowledge, strategies, and skills they need to lead and manage nursing and health services. For example, the ICN

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offers two global leadership programs: The ICN Leadership for Change program, which trains nurses to be effective leaders and managers; and Leadership in Negotiation, which teaches nurses how to achieve a safer working environment and just compensation. These two programs have reached nurses in our 50 countries in the past 12 years.

We must also demonstrate leadership by working with our governments to shape health policy. As nursing students, it is never too early to become politically active. Nurses are on the front line of care. We interact most closely with the public, and we know what programs and services are needed. Our knowledge and experience must inform public policy. Nursing associations are a key vehicle for influencing health policy, nationally and globally. The ICN also works to shape healthy policy. We advocate for policies that contribute to the health of populations, to sustainable development, and to the security and just treatment of nurses and health care professionals.

The ICN issues Position Statements, lobbies with governments and intergovernmental agencies, conducts media relations, and is involved with policymaking bodies such as the World Health Organization and the International Labor Organization. In the way, the ICN

The 21st Century – Nursing’s Window of Opportunity



Christine Hancock, ICN President

As future nurses, you are in good company - joining 12 million of the most hard-working, courageous and trusted people worldwide. And this is our time to shine. The twenty-first century is nursing’s window of opportunity. Today nursing is rightly recognized as absolutely vital to a nation’s health. We are better prepared than ever before, more cost-effective, more needed. And nurses consistently rank as the public’s most trusted professionals.

New nursing roles are emerging faster than ever before. From the family nurse to the nurse

practitioner to the excitement of telenursing, new opportunities are everywhere. Today there are also many exciting opportunities to work internationally. Working outside your home country can enrich and challenge you in many ways, leading to a very rewarding experience.

The International Council of Nurses has created a new vision for the 21st century. The vision declares, in part, that: *Our mission is to lead our societies to better health.* Strong future nursing leadership is one way we can help create a healthy world.

We encourage you to use your leadership skills to help nurses tackle the problems of poverty and illness and work towards a healthier world. In order to do this, we need faith in ourselves, a clear goal, and unity of spirit.

On behalf of the ICN family of nurses around the world, I congratulate you on joining the worldwide nursing community, and wish you much success and fulfillment for years to come.

raises its voice to make governments and international bodies aware of the key role that nurses play in a nation’s health status.

To attain our vision, we need to think beyond rigid definitions of our roles as nurses and embrace partnerships as much as possible.

Each of us can help lead the world to better health in this new century. To do so, we must speak with one voice, develop leadership skills, and advocate for healthy public policy. I applaud each of you for the choice you have made in taking on nursing as a career. ■

resources

icn.ch/index.html

the web site of the International Council of Nurses

www.patienttalk.info/

ICN's web site for patient information

www.whpa.org/

World Health Professions Alliance web site

www.fnif.org/

ICN's Florence Nightingale International Foundation web site

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The ICN Nursing Student Web Page

www.icn.ch/ns/ns_home.htm

ICN broadened its outreach to nursing students in 2003 through the launch of a new nursing students section on the ICN web site. The site highlights core elements of ICN's work and offers a hub for links to national nurses associations worldwide. Resources such as links to scholarship information, other student organizations, and pertinent health and nursing information are offered. The site also includes a Bulletin Board to facilitate information sharing among nursing students. New nursing roles are emerging faster than ever before. From the family nurse to the nurse practitioner to the excitement of telenursing, new opportunities are everywhere. With the worldwide nursing shortage at crisis levels, ICN feels it is important to encourage students by focusing on the rewards of the profession.