

Editorial: Global Nursing and the Power of Connection

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In an increasingly interconnected world, nursing stands as a powerful global force. At the 2025 International Council of Nurses (ICN) Congress in Helsinki, this was more evident than ever. With nurses from over 130 countries present, the event reaffirmed what many of us already know: though our systems may differ, the core challenges, and more importantly, strengths of nursing are shared across borders.

This year's ICN theme—"Investing in the Workforce for Health, Equity, and Economic Growth"—reminded us that nurses are not just caregivers, but economic and social drivers of health systems. As Howard Catton, CEO of ICN, aptly stated, "*Nursing is humanity in motion*" (ICN, 2025). Our work touches every aspect of society—especially in times of crisis.

We saw powerful sessions that ranged from policy advocacy to the ethical role of nurses in war zones, and from health equity to climate change and disaster preparedness. These issues are not abstract. As weather-related disasters increase globally, Maryland nurses must also prepare. Integrating disaster education into nursing curricula is no longer optional—it is essential. Our students should graduate understanding how to respond to mass casualty events, displacement, and infectious disease outbreaks, challenges they may face both locally and globally. The 2021 American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Essentials further reinforce this priority under Domain 3: Population Health, which outlines expectations for both entry-level and advanced practice nurses. Nurses are expected to be prepared to identify and manage disasters and emergencies as part of their population health competencies. This includes not only clinical response but also advocacy, policy development, and system-level preparedness. Nurses play a vital role in surveillance, prevention, containment, and ethical decision-making during public health emergencies, whether responding to pandemics or natural disasters (AACN, 2021).

The release of the State of the World's Nursing 2025 report brought renewed urgency to longstanding issues. The report projects a global shortfall of over 4.8 million nurses by 2030, despite nurses making up over half of the global health workforce (World Health Organization [WHO], 2025). It also highlights persistent inequities in distribution, investment, and leadership opportunities. Whether in Baltimore or Beirut, Lagos or London, we face the same questions: How do we recruit and retain? How do we support nurses' well-being? And how do we elevate the role of nurses in shaping policy?

The WHO report also emphasized the vital need for improved working conditions and mental health support, particularly post-COVID-19, when burnout and high workloads continue to affect the nursing workforce (WHO, 2025). Investment in leadership, governance, regulation, and equitable job creation are all policy imperatives outlined in the report. Notably, the concentration of nurses in high-income countries and the migration of foreign-trained nurses create serious imbalances that must be addressed

through ethical international collaboration and fair workforce policies.

Nursing is a global profession with shared goals and a collective future. Whether you're a bedside nurse, educator, student, or policy advocate, I encourage you to connect beyond your immediate circles. Join global forums. Share your voice. Learn from colleagues around the world. Our challenges may differ in scale; but our solutions, rooted in compassion, evidence, and leadership, are universal.

The future of nursing is global, and Maryland nurses are ready to lead. ■

References

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