The future of nursing and digital health: new ICN position statement highlights opportunities and risks

Geneva, Switzerland, 1 September   2023 – A new [position statement](#) by the International Council of Nurses (ICN) highlights the ways in which the digital technology revolution supports the rapid and positive transformation of health care systems and facilitates the delivery of nursing care and how people engage with their health and wellness.

The position statement, *Digital health transformation and nursing practice*, shows how digital technologies "have the potential to support equitable and universal access to health services, increase the efficiency and reliability of health systems, improve patient and health worker safety, respond to health workforce shortages, reduce costs and, ultimately, improve people's health outcomes."

In March this year, ICN President Dr Pamela Cipriano, speaking on the occasion of International Women's Day which had the theme "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality", said:

"Recent advances in digital health, including delivery of virtual care, the analysis of big data, the introduction of smart wearables and the dramatic developments in artificial intelligence, reinforce the need for nurses to be digital health experts so that they can maximize the advantages of these technologies, for the benefit of their patients.

Empowering nurses through innovations in digital health care will advance gender equity and improve patient care, but these benefits will only come about if sufficient attention is paid to nurses' needs in an increasingly technological world."

The new ICN position statement shows how nurses are accessing and using digital technologies to improve patient care and access to health care services.

However, it warns that "The digital divide - the gap that exists between those who have access to modern information and communication technology and those who do not – is creating a world where the benefits of digital transformation are not equal between countries or societal groups."

As the global voice of nursing, ICN:

- Supports the advancement of appropriate digital health to meet population health needs, strengthen health systems and as a way to respond to health workforce shortages.

- Believes that digital health must support integrated, people-centred health systems and promote health equity.
- Promotes the alignment of digital health technology to patient and nurse safety policy and processes.
- Believes that the development of digital health technology should be supported by the use of an international terminology standard, such as the International Classification for Nursing Practice (ICNP).
- Agrees that digital health should benefit people in a way that is ethical, safe, secure, reliable, equitable and sustainable.
- Believes that nurses must be involved and participate in national and global digital health decision-making forums and included in the planning, design, testing and implementation of digital health products and digitized health systems.
- Believes that nurses must participate in monitoring and evaluating new and emerging digital health technologies.
- Believes that nurse leaders play a crucial role in positively shaping the advancement of digital health and should be supported and resourced to lead the digital transformation for the nursing workforce.
- Recognises the barriers faced by some countries to implement appropriate digital health technologies and believes that global collaboration and resourced mechanisms to support these countries to advance their digital health capabilities are essential to shrink the digital divide.
- Believes that there is an urgent need for the nursing workforce to acquire the skills and competencies to deliver high-quality, safe, optimized person-centred care in a digital health environment.
- Encourages collaboration with other stakeholders to include opportunities to work and learn from interdisciplinary colleagues.
- Calls for an increased awareness on the environmental and health impact of digital waste and for digital health strategies to include plans to mitigate this impact.

ICN's position statements address a variety of areas related to health, well-being and nursing professional advancement. All position statements can be found here.