

ICN President says Universal Health Coverage will only be achieved by 2030 if there is a dramatic increase in investment in nursing

Geneva, Switzerland, 19 September 2023 – International Council of Nurses (ICN) President Dr Pamela Cipriano has stated that nursing holds the key to changes that must be made to health systems if the goal of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is to become a reality by the World Health Organization’s (WHO) deadline of 2030.

Speaking ahead of the United Nations High Level Meeting on UHC on 21 September, Dr Cipriano said nurses have the skills and expertise to make progress towards UHC, but shortages and a lack of investment around the world are reducing their impact.

Dr Cipriano added: “There is no simple solution when it comes to Universal Health Coverage, but there is no doubt that nurses hold the master key to unlocking better care for people everywhere.

‘Highly skilled nurses make a real difference, but unfortunately their efforts are being thwarted by the lack of investment from governments and healthcare organizations in educating new nurses, employing more nurses, improving the training and retention of those we already have, and enabling highly skilled advanced practice nurses to expand their roles and responsibilities.’”

ICN is a member of the International Health Partnership’s (UHC2030) Task Force, which has launched its Action Agenda setting out what needs to be done to move the journey towards UHC forward.

Dr Cipriano said having a robust nursing workforce is a vital first step on this journey, and that ICN’s own Charter for Change shows how nursing’s contribution to UHC can be maximised.

“ICN’s Charter for Change calls on governments to value, protect, respect, and invest in our nurses to ensure there is a sustainable future for nursing and health care. Without that investment, UHC will not be achieved ever, let alone by the fast-approaching deadline of 2030.

‘Access to healthcare is a universal right that should be respected by and for everyone on the planet. Nurses can make it a reality, but they can’t do it on their own, and they certainly can’t do it without a step-change in the amount of money governments are prepared to put into healthcare. It’s time we address health security by acknowledging that human capital is wealth embedded in people.

'The world will be a better place if governments open up their coffers and put health and nursing at the top of their financial plans. Every Dollar invested in nursing will return dividends for years to come. It's time for governments to wise up, step up and pay up - for the good of us all.'