



73rd Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific

Provisional agenda item 11

Mental health

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Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

ICN acknowledges the World Health Organization's draft Regional Framework for the Future of Mental Health in the Western Pacific 2023–2030 and calls for urgent action to address the mental health crisis within the region.

The world faces grave consequences from the lack of available mental health services and treatment. Mental illness impacts every country, culture and community, with the World Health Organization (WHO) stating that 10% of the global burden of disease is related to mental, neurological and substance use disorders. COVID-19 and the disruption in critical mental health services have exacerbated mental health problems which predated the pandemic, increasing the global burden of disease.

Healthcare professionals have pivotal roles in promoting and preventing mental conditions, identifying those at risk and providing care for people with mental health conditions. The knowledge, skills and motivations of the workforce significantly affect the quality-of-service provision. Therefore, it is essential to maximize efforts to create, support and develop a suitably qualified nursing workforce to meet current and future demands.

The role of nurses in the delivery of mental health care is multi-faceted; nurses are prepared to treat both the mental and physical health of their patients. They are trained and educated to develop a person-centred approach to care, ensuring that the patient receives holistic nursing care and care from the full health care team where needed. Mental health nurses, which represent the largest proportion of the mental health care workforce (44%), are vital to improving access to professional mental health care which will not only improve the lives of millions, but also have positive outcomes for the world. ICN estimates that there are approximately 300,000 mental health nurses across the world. However, the number of nurses working in mental health varies vastly across countries with some countries in the Western Pacific having just 1.5 nurses per 100,000 people. There are significant challenges in the region with major workforce shortages, under-resourcing and inappropriate policies and models of care.

An adequate number of nurses, with the right education, experience and adequate resourcing, can have a profound impact on improving the health and wellbeing of individuals and populations with mental illness.

ICN represents the 28 million nurses, the largest health professional group, providing mental health care around the world. ICN and members advocate for patients across the world, calling on Member States to:

- Commit to the actions outlined in the WHO's Mental Health Report 2022
- Develop, resource and implement a mental health workforce plan
- Review, update and invest in mental health education for health professionals
- Commit to and invest in recruitment and retention strategies for mental health



- Optimise health care delivery models by utilising mental health nurses to their full scope of practice
- Care for the mental health and wellbeing of all health professionals.
- We call on the members of the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific to consider ICN's *The Global Mental Health Nursing Workforce Report 2022*.

These recommendations will improve access to quality, safe and affordable mental health care. We look forward to working with you on this important programme.

The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of more than 130 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.