

MAY 12 – INTERNATIONAL NURSES AND TECHNICIANS DAY

On the occasion of International Nurses Week, International Midwives Day is celebrated on May 5, and International Nurses and Technicians Day on May 12.

International Nurses and Technicians Day is observed every year on May 12 in honor of the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. She was born in Florence on May 12, 1820. Throughout her life, she fought for the advancement of her profession and for women's rights. Florence Nightingale is considered a pioneer of modern nursing worldwide. She contributed to the promotion of graphical presentation of statistical data, initiated professional nursing education, and introduced methods for patient care and hospital organization that have been adopted in many countries. This day represents a global opportunity to highlight the key role of nurses in healthcare systems and their contribution to improving public health.

Medicine deals with people from the perspective of disease, while healthcare and nursing care focus on people from the perspective of their basic human needs. Nursing is a highly responsible profession that requires continuous professional development and lifelong medical education.

Nursing includes autonomous and collaborative care for individuals of all ages, families, groups, and communities, whether sick or healthy, in all settings. This includes health promotion, disease prevention, and care for the ill, disabled, and dying. Every country needs a competent, educated, motivated, well-distributed, and supported healthcare workforce as part of the global push toward universal health coverage, and nurses are essential to achieving these goals. Nurses are often the first, and sometimes the last, healthcare professionals a patient sees, and the quality of their initial assessment and subsequent care is vital for good health outcomes. Nurses also participate in health education for the population and vulnerable groups regarding risk factors for both communicable and non-communicable diseases, including smoking, unhealthy diet, alcohol misuse, drug use, physical inactivity, unsafe sexual behavior, and others.

The World Health Organization has issued important recommendations, including investing in the education of nurses and midwives, employing more specialized nurses, strengthening leadership capacities among nurses and midwives, reinforcing and recognizing the role of nurses within healthcare systems, and supporting healthcare workers in implementing health promotion and disease prevention activities, which are essential for the future development of healthcare services.

Nearly 50% of the global healthcare workforce consists of nurses and midwives. The world needs an additional 9 million nurses and midwives if universal health coverage is to be achieved by 2030.

The International Council of Nurses marks International Nurses Day 2026 with the theme: *"Our Nurses. Our Future. Empowered Nurses Save Lives."* This theme emphasizes the essential connection between empowering nurses and the quality of healthcare. In the modern healthcare context, nurses represent the largest professional group within healthcare systems and maintain direct and continuous contact with patients, enabling them to significantly influence treatment outcomes.

Scientific research shows a direct correlation between the number and competencies of nurses and reductions in morbidity and mortality. Educated and competent nurses contribute to improved patient safety, more effective communication within multidisciplinary teams, and greater accessibility of

healthcare services. According to the International Council of Nurses, empowering nurses through quality education, professional autonomy, and safe working conditions directly impacts the quality of healthcare services.

Empirical data indicate that higher staffing levels and greater nursing competencies are associated with fewer complications, lower mortality rates, and shorter hospital stays. In the context of global health challenges such as chronic diseases, population aging, and the emergence of new health risks, the role of nurses is becoming increasingly important. Therefore, investing in their education, status, and well-being means investing in the future of healthcare.

In this regard, investment in nursing should be viewed as a strategic priority. Empowered nurses not only improve patient outcomes but also contribute to a more efficient, sustainable, and equitable healthcare system. Within the International Council of Nurses, it is emphasized that investing in nurses is not only a professional issue, but also a strategic commitment to a sustainable and effective healthcare system. The ICN calls on governments and employers to take action to create and maintain healthcare systems that are safe, accessible, and responsive, and to ensure that nurses are treated not as an “invisible” but as an “invaluable” resource within healthcare systems. Investing in nurses is essential for rebuilding healthcare systems capable of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and universal health coverage, thereby improving global health.

Nurses should be supported in their daily work because they face numerous physical, mental, emotional, and ethical challenges, and addressing these challenges in ways that promote their overall well-being is imperative.

It is necessary to ensure protection against workplace violence and hazards and to implement international labor standards protecting nurses’ rights to work in safe and healthy environments that safeguard both physical and mental health. Strategies should be strengthened for recruiting and retaining nurses and addressing workforce shortages through systematic workforce planning and monitoring. Investment in high-quality, accredited nursing education programs is needed to prepare more new nurses and support the career development of existing nursing staff. Equality and respect for the nursing profession should be promoted as key contributors to high-quality healthcare systems.

Despite their critical role in healthcare, the world is facing a shortage of nurses, which is expected to worsen as populations grow and healthcare demands increase. Modern healthcare is based on integrated care, where nurses play an irreplaceable role. They are not only providers of medical procedures, but also key members of healthcare teams, emotional support providers for patients, and leaders of community health education activities. In the context of increasingly complex medical technologies and specialized treatments, their role is becoming even more responsible and critical for the quality of healthcare services.

The Future of the Healthcare System in the Republic of Macedonia

Staff shortages and population aging create a need for strategic development of the nursing profession. According to the World Health Organization, the optimal ratio of nurses to physicians should be approximately 3:1, while in Macedonia this ratio is significantly lower.

Therefore, it is necessary to:

- Increase the number of trained nurses;
- Improve working conditions and salaries;
- Integrate technologies such as electronic health records and telemedicine;
- Support specialized training and continuous education.

Investment in the professional development of nurses is not only a local interest but also a strategic component of regional healthcare. Countries that invest in nursing development achieve better health indicators, lower mortality rates, and higher levels of trust in healthcare systems.

Macedonia should follow these trends and encourage the engagement of a larger number of educated and specialized nurses within the healthcare system to ensure better healthcare coverage for its population.

As in many other countries, Macedonia is experiencing a declining trend in the number of nurses. According to the Workforce Report of the Institute of Public Health, in 2024 there were a total of 9,046 nurses employed in healthcare organizations in Macedonia, including 1,830 nurses with higher education degrees, 181 nurses with post-secondary education, and 7,035 nurses with secondary vocational education.

Nurses play a key role in health promotion, disease prevention, and the provision of primary healthcare. They provide emergency care and will be essential in achieving universal health coverage.

Nurses are the foundation of quality and humane healthcare. Their expertise, dedication, and ethical responsibility are critical for patient well-being and the stability of healthcare systems. The future of healthcare depends on their professionalization, continuous development, and appropriate support from society and institutions. Supporting and recognizing the work of nurses is not only an ethical obligation, but also a strategic investment in the nation's health.

We express great respect and appreciation to nurses for their dedication, selfless work, and care for the health of the population.

Prepared by:
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