WHA42.27  Strengthening nursing/midwifery in support of the strategy for health for all

The Forty-second World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolution WHA36.11 on the role of nursing/midwifery personnel in the strategy for health for all;

Recalling the discussions at the seventy-fifth session of the Executive Board, when the urgent need for an increase in the number of training programmes for teachers and managers of nursing/midwifery services was emphasized, together with the need to develop leaders to motivate and stimulate the changes required to reorient nursing/midwifery education and practice;

Recalling the discussions at the Thirty-ninth World Health Assembly on the role of nursing/midwifery personnel in the strategy for health for all and the conclusions that it was not possible to implement national strategies effectively without the participation of nursing/midwifery personnel; that there was an urgent need to strengthen nursing/midwifery education and practice in primary health care; and that there was a need to increase the Organization's nursing/midwifery activities at all levels and to ensure the involvement of nursing/midwifery personnel in the development and implementation of health-for-all strategies;

Concerned at the present decline in numbers of nursing/midwifery personnel and recruits in many countries and the implications for the future;

Bearing in mind that the demand for nursing care will increase and the content of care will have to be expanded and partially changed in view of the aging population and life-extending technology, the expansion of activities in health promotion and disease prevention, including safe motherhood initiatives, and the effects of the AIDS pandemic;

Recognizing also that scarce nursing/midwifery skills must be used more cost-effectively;

Aware that little research on nursing/midwifery is being undertaken, and that there are few suitably qualified personnel available to carry out or supervise such research; that, on the other hand, information and management systems need to be developed so that adequate and reliable information about nursing/midwifery is more readily available;

Having considered the report of the Director-General on the role of nursing/midwifery personnel in the strategy for health for all, and the comments of the Executive Board thereon;

1. URGES Member States:

(1) to review their national nursing/midwifery needs and resources and to devise measures to avert shortfalls in the future;

(2) to take the necessary action in developing strategies to recruit and retain, educate and reorientate, and improve the qualifications of nursing/midwifery personnel in order to meet national needs;

(3) to encourage and support the appointment of nursing/midwifery personnel in senior leadership and management positions and to facilitate their participation in planning and implementing the country's health activities;

(4) to encourage and support the development of research on more efficient and effective methods of employment of nursing/midwifery resources, including training in research methodology;
(5) to support both the reorientation to primary health care of all educational programmes for nursing/midwifery personnel and the expansion of their continuing education;

(6) to adopt or, where necessary, amend legislation and regulations to facilitate the involvement of nursing/midwifery personnel in all aspects of primary health care;

(7) to provide the necessary support to nursing/midwifery personnel, especially those in peripheral areas, and to follow up their work, so as to enable them to contribute effectively to the promotion and protection of health, especially the health of the most vulnerable groups;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to increase support to Member States to strengthen the planning, implementation and evaluation of the nursing/midwifery components of national health programmes, in particular the development, utilization and improvement of the qualifications of nursing/midwifery personnel;

(2) to strengthen the nursing/midwifery components of all WHO programmes, increasing within available resources the number of nurses and midwives in senior positions at global and regional levels;

(3) to intensify support for the global network of WHO collaborating centres for nursing development and, through these centres, promote the involvement of other institutions and agencies in extending WHO's work;

(4) to promote and support the training of nursing/midwifery personnel in research methodology in order to facilitate their participation in health research programmes, including the development of information systems on nursing/midwifery;

(5) to develop tools for monitoring progress in this field and to report to the Forty-fifth World Health Assembly on the progress made in the implementation of this resolution.

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(Thirteenth plenary meeting, 19 May 1989 - Committee A, third report)