BEYOND THE BEDSIDE: HOW CAN NURSES HELP TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE
Nurses play a crucial role in the transformation of the healthcare landscape. As we look ahead, there is an increasing focus on self-care, preventative measures, and fostering more inclusive health systems.

Building on this year’s Nursing supplement, we hosted two webinars that identified the following outtakes as key opportunities to help empower nurses to shape the future of healthcare.

According to a recent report published by the International Council of Nurses, a shortage of nurses across the world, including in countries that provide nurses for international recruitment, has created a global health emergency.1 Nurses are opting to migrate due to job dissatisfaction, better career opportunities, and concerns about their personal safety.2,3 This is having a subsequent impact on healthcare systems as they are unable to offset the loss of skilled nurses.

The nursing shortage and its impact on healthcare was echoed in the Clinician of the Future 2023 report, in which 54% of clinicians from across the world highlighted the shortage of nurses as the main priority for healthcare over the next two to three years.

PRIORITIZING NURSING WORKFORCE SATISFACTION AND RETENTION

“Our nurses have expressed they want to feel valued, safe within their working environment, satisfied with their job and most importantly want to have a work-life balance. But all this is being hindered by the nursing shortages, so we must start addressing this.”

Celina Eves, Group Chief Nursing Officer, Vinmec Healthcare System, Vietnam
Therefore, there is an increasing need for healthcare organizations to prioritize the personal health and well-being of nurses. With a concerted focus on supporting them with resilience training to help retain the workforce and ensure that high-quality care can continue to be delivered to all.

Furthermore, panelists expressed that nurses should continue to engage in policymaking decisions, as they are best positioned to provide invaluable insights. Through participation, they have the potential to positively influence practice standards, amplify the concerns of the workforce, and advocate how they can be best supported.

“The government has declared that nurses are the backbone of healthcare. With this in mind, the doors should be opened so that nurses can be more involved in the policymaking decisions to overcome these challenges.”

Dr. Suresh K. Sharma, Professor & Principal, College of Nursing, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Jodhpur, India
Nurses undertake diverse roles and responsibilities, amplifying the need for evidence-based clinical knowledge and skills to effectively carry out their duties. However, a common challenge facing nursing schools is the education-practice gap. This refers to the difficulty nurses encounter in connecting the knowledge gained during their academic studies with real-life clinical settings.

Panelists explained that this gap in particular was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as nurse training was disrupted by the transition to online teaching. This issue was also echoed in the Clinician of the Future 2023 report, in which 72% of the nurses surveyed agreed that they currently lack hands-on practical training due to the pandemic.

In addition to this, panelists noted that nursing schools should look to modify the curriculum enabling student nurses to experience a greater variety of clinical specialties during their education. By providing this opportunity, future nurses will be better prepared to apply their knowledge and meet the complex requirements of care when in practice.

“The question we should ask is whether the nursing curriculum is being properly developed. We should have nurses coming into the profession who are practice ready.”

Sofia Macedo, Clinical Operations Director, Center for National Health Insurance, Saudi Arabia
The only way to bridge the gap to better protect our most vulnerable patients is to get help from healthcare organizations on the transition-to-practice programs.

Diane Evans-Prior, Dean at Central New Mexico Community College, United States

Panelists further acknowledged that nursing leaders should collaborate with nursing schools to help them identify which appropriate strategies need to be implemented to mitigate this education-practice gap. Moreover, healthcare organizations should support nursing schools in the establishment of rigorous transition-to-practice programs. This will benefit students, clinical nurses and, most importantly, the patients, ultimately leading to an improvement in nursing practice and the quality of care.

“Nursing students should be provided with a broad spectrum of placements to enable them to develop skills in a variety of clinical areas that we expect from our novice practitioners.”

Bernadette Thomson, RN, RM Med, Nursing Director of Education at Princess Alexander Hospital & Queen Elizabeth II Hospital and Clinical Associate Professor at Queensland University of Technology, Australia

“The lack of nursing student practice readiness goes beyond what can be offered in the curriculum. Many nursing schools struggle to find clinical placements with available preceptors for their students to learn the necessary nursing skills while watching and doing.”

Dr. Edwidge J Thomas, DNP, ANP-BC, Vice President of Clinical Solutions, Northwell Holdings, United States
There is a need to prioritize professional development and promote an environment for growth and lifelong learning. One effective approach to achieving this goal is by providing support to the nursing workforce at every stage of their educational and professional journeys, through the guidance of experienced mentors. These mentors can play a pivotal role in nurturing and empowering the next generation of nurses.

It was acknowledged by panelists that the implementation of mentorship programs can encourage the sharing of best practices and nurture nursing leadership.

CREATING A CULTURE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LIFELONG LEARNING

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“Fundamentally, it is about creating a culture that promotes lifelong learning. We should use our experienced nurses to mentor students and newly registered nurses.”

Becky Thomas, RN, Leadership Development Facilitator, Florence Nightingale Foundation, United Kingdom

DRIVING FORWARD MORE INCLUSIVE HEALTHCARE

Healthcare systems must keep up to ensure inclusivity for all employees and patients. As nursing students embark on their professional journeys, equipping them with suitable skills, knowledge, and tools becomes imperative to deliver truly inclusive healthcare. Nursing schools have a responsibility to continue to drive forward a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. By doing so, they can empower future nurses to navigate complex healthcare systems while effectively meeting the diverse needs of various populations.

Panelists highlighted that an ongoing commitment is also required to actively expand the student population, particularly from underrepresented backgrounds. In addition, nursing schools must create an environment and develop a curriculum that supports the various learning needs of such students, especially those from low-resourced schools. By fostering and nurturing a diverse nursing workforce, it will improve health outcomes and help to create a stronger foundation that better reflects the society they serve.

“Nursing schools should develop programs that support students who may need a refresher in basic courses and well-being to help them thrive in intense academic environments.”

Dr. Edwidge J Thomas, DNP, ANP-BC, Vice President of Clinical Solutions, Northwell Holdings, United States
Healthcare organizations should consider conducting health needs assessments within their local communities to truly understand the pain points, challenges they face and help to determine future priorities. By allowing the community to define the problem, effective partnerships can form, incorporating local voices into every part of the initiative. Through community engagement, the invaluable insights gained can ensure that healthcare provision is more people-centric. Not only that, but it will serve as the foundation for developing effective quality improvement initiatives and establishing partnerships that drive meaningful and lasting change.

In addition, panelists reiterated the importance of exposing students to community settings during their education. It serves as a positive learning experience as nursing students will have the opportunity to deal with real health problems in natural settings.

“To develop meaningful partnerships with our local communities, we must first understand what their needs and pain points are. I have seen nursing schools and various organizations start partnerships in this way, and what we see is that people are much more engaged in their healthcare.”

Dr. Edwidge J Thomas, DNP, ANP-BC, Vice President of Clinical Solutions, Northwell Holdings, United States

“It is useful to expose students to their communities during their education, as it makes them at least a little more prepared to face the challenges when they transition to their professional careers.”

Dr. S.J Nalini, Professor & Principal, Sri Ramachandra Faculty of Nursing, Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, India
Given these considerations, we must continue to empower and support nurses to support them on their healthcare journey. Doing so can enable them to make invaluable contributions to the field, ultimately leading to improved patient outcomes and a higher quality of care.

To learn more about the changing landscape of the nursing profession and the contribution of nurses, visit the Nursing Supplement: The Critical Role Nurses Play in Shaping the Future of Healthcare and to understand the challenges facing the healthcare workforce, and the opportunities nurses see in generative AI across the global healthcare industry download the Clinician of the Future 2023 report.

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As part of Elsevier Health’s Future of Nursing campaign, two panel discussions were held covering the US, UK, EMEA, APAC and ANZ regions. These discussions brought together a diverse group of global nursing leaders, practising nurses, and nursing educators.

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References