

25TH INTERNATIONAL QUADRENNIAL CONGRESS COUNCIL OF NURSES: PARTICIPATION REQUIRED

I consider it a fundamental right for populations to have access to the conditions and resources necessary for their health and well-being. As such, our ultimate goal as nurses should be to maximize our contributions to achieve optimal health for the greatest number of people (Inaugural speech of Judith Shamian in the Interactional Council of Nurses, Melbourne, Australia, on May 22, 2012).

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a non-governmental organization formed by more than 130 countries that includes a representation by each country, replicating the model of the United Nations, although without Security Council. The decisions are taken by the Council of National Representatives (CNRs), during meetings which take place every two years, in which there is the possibility of only one vote per country, as well as possibility of non-voting representatives. The ICN has its base in Geneva, Switzerland. The organization has completed 113 years of existence and is considered the representative of more than 13 million nurses worldwide. For these purposes, this institution addresses the advocacy for nurses, internationally.

In 2013, the ICN Quadrennial Congress was held in Melbourne, Australia, from the 13th to the 22nd of May. A broad program was featured, which covered all the programs that the ICN developed and counted with the presentations of most of the member countries. Among the topics, some assume greater importance and will be discussed below.

Equity and Access to Health Care was the official theme of this topic. The organization held a more scrutinizing position which mainly focusing on the quality and costs to improve the health of population. In this, nurses are seen as leaders capable and responsible for making the difference, because they are the dedicated professionals that innovate care practices with the goal of fulfilling health needs. However, many are exposed to economic pressures or obstacles. Consequently, they need access to resources, support mechanisms, and especially access to continue the professional formation.¹

With regards to the practical nurses, the question of how broad the space for action is had arisen. For example, there are a significant number of people who are not regulated or registered as nurses, but are performing tasks previously restricted to professional nursing. The suggested way to overcome this challenge calls nurses to increasingly participate in Health Systems and/or governments.

The challenge of tuberculosis, which has a growing prevalence and mortality rate, in this context, causes nurses to be seen as the key players. This is crucial as they make up the largest segment of the workforce of the health industry. They are seen as essential to modifying this reality, due to their role in frontline patient care and the bonds that they form with the patients and their families. Because of this close relationship, they are able to propose ways to approach patients and users of medication when obtaining diagnostics, as well as work in health education for better adherence to the same treatments.

The aging of the population has been the object of special attention for the ICN this year. Given the increase in this segment for all societies of the world, health systems generates an increase in costs to fulfill the needs of these users. It is understood that at the current pace most old people have less access to health care due to costs. Still, in this perspective, this same environment determines an increasing demand for training more nurses to perform this type of care. Apparently, this issue is still intensely debated, because there are clear paths to follow, but we realize that there is a strong concern of governments.

Another topic was HIV/AIDS, which continues to challenge all health systems in the world for their ability to be present in all societies and have an enormous impact on budgets due to rising costs. In this fight, the nurses stand out for their performance in the network of prevention, care and education.

Patient safety was highlighted in relation to the concern of health professionals to the patients' lives. The subject covers the various conditions of insecurity and danger to users of the health system, from the application of a medication to a patient for a few minutes, before the time prescribed to a

surgery of the amputation of a healthy extremity rather than a sick one. Furthermore, the increase of nosocomial infections has produced an exponential increase in health costs. It was recalled that patient safety is a concern, mainly in rich countries but also in developing countries; being notably higher in the developing countries, since there are more adverse effects.

Finally, the agenda addressed obesity as a public health problem. The expert of the University of Australia, who highlighted the nurses as the essential professionals to combat the obesity epidemic, presented the panel.

Still, I would like to comment on the importance of the events of the ICN for the nurses of the world. For the majority which lives in developing countries, it constitutes as the only medium of dialogue with an international audience which can give voice to their problems. Also, a part of the ICN is to be inserted in an international context in which organizations seek collective solutions, both for the improvement of health care and for the excellence in professional practice of Nursing.

From 2009 to 2013, the ICN chose the word "access" to develop the management program. Upon taking office, the current President elected the word "impact" to act in the next four years.

Finally, I will show some data regarding the results of the election for the Quadrennial 2013-2017 event: The president was elected with 61 of 90 votes from the Council and is known as Judith Shamian from Canada. 566 posters and 506 oral presentations were presented. The event had a total of 3990 participants, coming from 124 countries, 19 of them were from Brazil and 25% of participants were Australian. Participation in general elections can be considered to be significant, since the conference was held at a place far away which has an extremely expensive cost of living.

Joining this event is bound to a context of globalization, in which the production of knowledge is valued and seen as a strategy for applicability in practice.

Joel Rolim Mancia

Editor at Nursing Journal in Focus. Ph.D. in Nursing. Director at Brazilian Nursing Association, Section RS. Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

REFERENCES

1. Hassmiller SB. An 'action-oriented blueprint' for the future of nursing. *Am J Nurs.* 2010 Dec; 110(12):7.