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Nursing - A profession in demand: A review

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Abstract

Nursing is one of the foremost noble professions in the world which teaches a person to serve the humanity with utmost compassion and with selfless devotion. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted essential services in 92% of countries at the height of the pandemic in 2021. In 2022, 84% of countries still reported disruptions. For all countries to reach Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health and well-being, WHO estimates that the world will need an additional 9 million nurses and midwives by the year 2030. The International Council of Nurses (ICN) (2021) projects that over 13 million nurses worldwide are required to bridge the gap in the nursing shortage by 2030.

Keywords: Nursing, profession, demand, nursing shortage

Introduction

Nursing is one of the foremost noble professions in the world which teaches a person to serve the humanity with utmost compassion and with selfless devotion. During COVID-19 pandemic, we can see how the nurses are toiling hard day and night to care for their patients without paying much attention to their own well-being ^[1].

Nursing is one of the most valued, noble and honourable professions in the world. It is the only profession in which a person does not think or care about the monetary gains and care solely and wholly for the benefit and gain of the people who are sick and unwell. Nurses and doctors save millions of lives daily. From the beginning of time, professions have been created and some have diminished with time ^[2].

Nursing is a noble and virtuous profession and is probably one of the most prominent and important sectors of the health care system that allows you to see people at their worst, turn it around, and nurture them to become their best. The main goal of the nurse is to provide care, comfort, and support to their patients. This job not only changes the patients' lives, but it changes the feel of the community and world around us ^[3].

In recent years nursing has become a buzz word among international agencies like UNO, and WHO and among global leaders, to achieve Sustainable developmental goals, WHO recognizes importance of nursing professionals and their developmental strategies, to involve nurses in policy making, at the same time ICN advised Governments to invest in Nursing.

Investment in nursing is not the loss rather it gives returns in terms of improvised health care delivery system.

Universal sustainable developmental goals key facts

- In September 2015 United Nations made history, when 193 members unanimously adopted 17 sustainable goals or SDG's for post 2015 developmental agenda. In this third goal is good health and well-being.
- SDG 3 has 13 targets and 28 indicators to measure progress toward targets. The first nine targets are outcome targets:
- Universal health coverage (UHC) means that all people have access to the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship
- Achieving UHC is one of the targets the nations of the world set when they adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015.
- The world is off track to make significant progress towards universal health coverage (Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target 3.8) by 2030. Improvements to health services coverage have stagnated since 2015, and the proportion of the population that faced catastrophic levels of out-of-pocket health spending increased continuously since 2000. This global pattern is consistent across all regions and the majority of countries.
- The UHC service coverage index increased from 45 to 68 between 2000 and 2021. However, recent progress in increasing coverage has slowed compared to pre-2015 gains, rising only 3 index points between 2015 and 2021 and showing no change since 2019.
- The proportion of the population not covered by

essential health services decreased by about 15% between 2000 and 2021, with minimal progress made after 2015. This indicates that in 2021, about 4.5 billion people were not fully covered by essential health services.

- About 2 billion people are facing financial hardship including 1 billion experiencing catastrophic out-of-pocket health spending (SDG indicator 3.8.2) or 344 million people going deeper into extreme poverty due to health costs.
- The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted essential services in 92% of countries at the height of the pandemic in 2021. In 2022, 84% of countries still reported disruptions.
- To build back better, WHO's recommendation is to reorient health systems using a primary health care (PHC) approach. Most (90%) of essential UHC interventions can be delivered through a PHC approach, potentially saving 60 million lives and increasing average global life expectancy by 3.7 years by 2030 ^[4].

World Health Organization key facts

- Approximately 27 million men and women make up the global nursing and midwifery workforce. This accounts for nearly 50% of the global health workforce.
- There is a global shortage of health workers, in particular nurses and midwives, who represent more than 50% of the current shortage in health workers.
- The largest needs-based shortages of nurses and midwives are in South East Asia and Africa.
- For all countries to reach Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health and well-being, WHO estimates that the world will need an additional 9 million nurses and midwives by the year 2030.
- Nurses play a critical role in health promotion, disease prevention and delivering primary and community care. They provide care in emergency settings and will be key to the achievement of universal health coverage.
- Achieving health for all will depend on there being sufficient numbers of well-trained and educated, regulated and well supported nurses and midwives, who receive pay and recognition commensurate with the services and quality of care that they provide.
- Investing in nurses and midwives is good value for money. The report of the UN High Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth concluded that investments in education and job creation in the health and social sectors result in a triple return of improved health outcomes, global health security, and inclusive economic growth.
- Globally, 70% of the health and social workforce are women compared to 41% in all employment sectors. Nursing and midwifery occupations represent a significant share of the female workforce ^[5].

Nurses and midwives are central to Primary Health Care and are often the first and sometimes the only health professional that people see and the quality of their initial assessment, care and treatment is vital. They are also part of their local community-sharing its culture, strengths and vulnerabilities-and can shape and deliver effective

interventions to meet the needs of patients, families and communities.

Dr Tedros, Director General of WHO, at the ICN Congress in Singapore earlier this year, said that the WHO vision cannot be delivered without nurses. Indeed, when nurses are used to their full potential the world will see a difference in how health care is delivered." Globally we are 9 million nurses short. This really needs to change if we are ever to achieve UHC. Without nurses, without investing in nurses and improving the conditions of their employment, governments will not retain nurses in the health workforce and therefore never achieve UHC.

The Nursing Now Campaign has been a great support in raising the profile of nurse's in policy areas and promoting leadership among nurses

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) (2021) projects that over 13 million nurses worldwide are required to bridge the gap in the nursing shortage by 2030.

WHO recognizes the vital role that nurses play in primary health care delivery worldwide including research, disease prevention, treating the injured, palliative care and more Which is represented through several World Health Assembly resolutions. These documents demonstrate the importance WHO Member States attach to nursing and midwifery services as a means of achieving better health for all communities.⁶

The State of the World's Nursing 2020

The State of the World's Nursing 2020, Provides an in-depth look at the largest component of the health workforce.

Findings identify important gaps in the nursing workforce and priority areas for investment in nursing education, jobs, and leadership to strengthen nursing around the world and improve health for all.

Nurses are the backbone of any health system. Today, many nurses find themselves on the frontline in the battle against Covid-19

This report highlights the nursing contribution and confirms that investment in the nursing profession is a benefit to society, not a cost. The world needs millions more nurses, and we are calling on governments to do the right thing, invest in this wonderful profession and watch their populations benefit from the amazing work that only nurses can do ^[7]."

Indian scenario

As per Indian Nursing Council records, there are around 33.41 lakh registered nursing personnel, including 23,40,501 registered nurses and registered midwives, and 10,00,805 nurse associates (9,43,951 Auxiliary Nurse Midwives), and 56,854 lady health visitors in the country ^[8].

- Currently India has only 0.7 doctors (Global average is 1/1000) and 1.7 nurses (Global is 2.5/1000) available per thousand population ^[9].
- India stands at 67th rank against 133 developing countries with regard to number of doctors and 75th rank with respect to number of nurses
- As per Union Ministry data submitted to Rajya sabha. The nurse-population ratio in the country at present is 1.96 nurses per 1,000 population,"

FICCI report

It says nursing is becoming less desirable as a profession and is witnessing increased migration to foreign countries, which has left India facing one of its worst shortages of nursing staff in recent years. The country needs 2.4 million nurses to meet the growing demand (FICCI report, 2016) ^[10].

Despite the critical role they play in health care, there is a shortage of nurses worldwide that is expected to rise as the population grows. Initiatives to expand health care services, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, are succeeding in providing access to previously underserved communities, which furthers the need for trained nurses. Every country needs a competent, motivated, well-distributed and supported health workforce as part of the global drive for universal health coverage, and nurses are central to these efforts.

Global demand

- The Bureau of Labour Studies shows the demand for nurses is trending upward. While the average growth rate for all occupations is 5%, the job outlook for nursing is 6% between 2021 and 2031. Each year, through 2031, will see approximately 203,000 jobs for RNs. Increasing the nurse workforce is necessary throughout the US ^[11].
- The number of vacancies for registered nurses had further increased to 28,335, surpassing all other occupations in the Canadian labour market ^[12].
- There are currently 46828 NHS nurses vacancies and 11.8% high time demand of nurses in UK. Australia is facing a significant nursing shortage, with projections indicating a deficit of up to 100,000 nurses by 2025, as reported by the Health Workforce Australia (HWA) ^[13].
- According to the latest data, there are currently 184,565 Registered Nurses working in Saudi Arabia, of whom 70,319 are Saudi nationals. Foreign nurses comprise about 70% of the total number of nurses and are mostly Indian, Filipino and Malaysian. In addition, the demand for nurses in Saudi Arabia is projected to double by 2030 due to an annual population growth rate of 2.52%. Thus, by 2030, about 150,000 nurses need to be hired ^[14].

The Future Perspectives

The nursing profession in India has come a long way, but there is still much to be done to meet the growing healthcare needs of the population. Here are some future perspectives for the growth of nursing in India:

1. Increase the number of nursing programs

One of the main challenges facing the nursing profession in India is the shortage of nurses. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the nurse-to-population ratio in India is 1:1,457, which is significantly lower than the WHO recommended ratio of 1:300. To address this shortage, there needs to be an increase in the number of nursing programs in the country.

2. Improving the quality of nursing education

The quality of nursing education in India varies widely, with some programs providing excellent education and others

falling short. To ensure that nurses are adequately prepared to meet the healthcare needs of the population, there needs to be a focus on improving the quality of nursing education in the country. This can be achieved by setting and enforcing standards for nursing education and providing ongoing professional development opportunities for nurses.

3. Enhancing the scope of nursing practice

The scope of nursing practice in India is limited, and nurses often perform tasks that are outside their scope of practice due to a lack of healthcare resources. To enhance the scope of nursing practice, there needs to be a shift towards a more collaborative healthcare model, where nurses are given more autonomy and responsibility in delivering healthcare services.

4. Promoting research in nursing

Research is crucial in advancing the nursing profession and improving healthcare outcomes. However, nursing research in India is still in its infancy, and there is a need for more research to be conducted on nursing practice, education, and policy. To promote research in nursing, there needs to be a focus on building research capacity among nurses and providing funding opportunities for nursing research. ¹⁵

Conclusion

Nursing is one of the most valued, noble and honourable professions in the world. With its growing demand post COVID period throughout the world including developed and developing countries has raised as number one profession with 11.8% with high time demand only in UK. Highly paid jobs, leadership responsibilities and opportunities in wide variety of setting has seen rapid growth in its scope. WHO has recognised the importance of nurses in achieving UHC goals by 2030. ICN has recommended to invest in nursing. With advancement in nursing education standards and curriculum based on skills has recently been added to its folds. Due to shortage of Nursing professionals around the globe, Nursing remains a Demanding profession over all other profession in next decade.

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