



XIX PAN AMERICAN SANITARY CONFERENCE

XXVI REGIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING

WASHINGTON, D.C., U.S.A.
September-October 1974

Provisional Agenda Item 33

CSP19/15, Rev. 1 (Eng.)
30 September 1974
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

NURSING GOALS FOR THE DECADE

The Executive Committee of the Pan American Health Organization at its 72nd Meeting, reviewed the nursing program in the proposed program and budget estimates and the projects through which the Organization provides assistance. Upon review of the current situation in nursing in relation to the achievement of goals of the Ten-year Health Plan, a summary of which is included, it was noted that Governments should intensify their efforts if the goals were to be achieved. The Committee therefore resolved:

- "1. To recommend to the XIX Pan American Sanitary Conference that it consider approving a resolution along these lines:

THE XIX PAN AMERICAN SANITARY CONFERENCE,

Taking into account the goals of the Ten-year Health Plan for the Americas;

Bearing in mind that the delivery of nursing services is one of the principal channels for providing health care and consequently its availability in quantity and quality directly affects the achievement of many health program goals; and

Considering the complexity of the problem confronting health authorities in providing patients with a level of safe nursing care as stipulated by the goals,

RESOLVES:

1. To recommend to Governments that they reexamine the nursing manpower situation in relation to:

- (a) The needs of the services in order to achieve the goals;
- (b) The trend in the increment of nursing positions since the beginning of the 1970 decade;
- (c) The possibility of financing new posts; and
- (d) The actual nursing manpower production and its adequacy in relation to the health system's capacity for absorption.

2. To urge the Governments to intensify efforts and take the necessary measures to establish the nursing positions required to deliver the health care stipulated in the goals, and to increase nursing manpower production through the creation and strengthening of the nursing education programs required and provision of the resources needed.

2. To request the Director to review the assistance the Organization can give countries to carry out the foregoing and to report to the XXIII Meeting of the Directing Council on the progress made by the countries as of that date."

The Ministers of Health of the Americas in their III Special Meeting held in Santiago, Chile, in 1972, established goals in health which, if they are to be achieved, require that modifications be made in the future development of the existing system of nursing. The extension of health coverage, reduction of preventable communicable diseases and of maternal, infant and child mortality are goals that can be attained only if there is available in the services nursing personnel in sufficient number and type to deliver the health care required. Furthermore, in most countries the extension of coverage stipulated in the Ten-year Health Plan and applied to a rapidly growing population necessitates that nursing personnel assume responsibility for providing primary care. The attainment of the goals not only requires an increased number of nursing personnel, both professional and auxiliary, but also more efficient and effective use of existing nursing manpower resources. Priorities must be assigned in programs and activities for the use of these resources. There must be a clear definition of the extent of health coverage and levels of care that are to be provided; realignment of the functions of all personnel in the health team; and improved geographical and institutional distribution of the nursing resources.

The goals specific to nursing stipulate that the quality of nursing intervention must be such that it safeguards the life and health of the individual. The goals also specify that the organization of nursing in a country should be as a system where the output, or functions to be performed, should be in relation to health program goals and objectives, as well as that the type and number of nursing personnel required be determined with relation to attaining such output through effective articulation of all the elements. This is to be accomplished in at least 60 per cent of the countries by the end of the decade.

The realization of the goals of those health programs having a nursing input will require by the end of the decade a minimal work force of approximately 700,000 nursing personnel, that is, 19 per 10,000 population, of which 4.5 are nurses and 14.5 of an auxiliary group. This means an increase of 184 per cent in the nurse group and 134 per cent in the auxiliary group, which signifies a corresponding increase in the number of new positions in the services.

To provide the health services with this work force requires the preparation of approximately 125,000 nurses and 300,000 nursing auxiliaries. This calls for the tripling of the present production of nurses, from 5,000 to 15,000 per year. However, for some countries, such as Brazil and Colombia, the annual number of graduates will have to be increased 10 to 15 times. On the other end of the spectrum, the nurse production in Mexico and Panama already surpasses the minimal goal. Of the remaining countries, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador need to increase their present number 7 to 8 times, and the remaining countries 2 to 4 times.

As to the nursing auxiliary group, the current number graduating yearly will also have to be tripled, that is, from 12,000 to 36,000, if minimal goals are to be met. Colombia, Nicaragua, Cuba, Chile, and Uruguay, with their present annual production rate, will reach or surpass the minimal goal during the decade. Ecuador, Bolivia, and Haiti, however, must increase their actual number of graduates per year by 9 to 11 times. All other countries require an increase of 2 to 6 times.

Measures to be taken by the countries to provide the quantity and type of nursing personnel differ. Some countries need to focus on increasing the number of nurse graduates while maintaining the actual production of nursing auxiliaries; others have to focus on training of auxiliaries. The majority of countries, however, must increase the production of all categories of nursing personnel.

While many of the countries in the Region have defined their health manpower goals for the decade, few have based these on the need for attaining the health program goals and taken into consideration the realignment of functions of the health team members.

In many countries there is a trend towards increasing student matriculation in schools of nursing, but the numbers are insufficient to meet the manpower goals. At the same time, it is reported that in many countries the capacity of the services to absorb new graduates is limited as far as present production is concerned, as a result of which numerous graduates are unable to find employment. There appears to be little coordination between the production of nursing personnel on the one hand and the existence of the positions needed to absorb graduates into the services on the other.

The foregoing situation calls for definite, direct intervention on the part of national authorities. The number of nursing personnel needed must be based on their functions in the delivery of health care, taking into account the level and quantity of care to be provided. Countries should make explicit the inherent difference in the utilization of the professional from that of the auxiliary, terminating the use of substitutive personnel. This action would greatly facilitate the definition of types and numbers of nursing personnel required.

The preparation of the necessary number and types of nursing personnel, and their subsequent absorption into the services, requires careful planning, both by the sectors of health and education. It also requires the formulation and implementation of plans of action that are accompanied by the necessary funding and periodic evaluation of results.

Therefore, unless there is a clear definition in each country of the extent of health coverage to be attained, the levels of care to be provided, and realignment of functions of the different members of the health team, and unless ministries of health take a definite decision to intervene in this situation and so alter present trends in preparation, absorption, and use of nursing personnel, the health goals for the decade cannot be achieved.