

EDITORIAL**IT IS TIME FOR ADVANCED NURSING PRACTICE IN THE EASTERN COUNTRIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: MARKING THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE NURSE AND THE MIDWIFE****Brigita Skela-Savič** *ICN Board member**Angela Boškin Faculty of Health Care, Jesenice, Slovenia*

We are at the end of year 2020, which has been declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife and which also commemorates the two hundredth birthday of Florence Nightingale. Many local, national, and international events were planned, but the coronavirus pandemic moved our celebrations to the virtual world. What's more, the pandemic showed the paramount importance of nurses – their knowledge, holistic approach, and sacrifice to save lives.

The Nursing Now campaign, with its multifaceted objectives, aims to alert national officials to the fact that nurses and midwives play a vital role in ensuring access, efficiency, and quality of care (Buchan et al., 2018), as the WHO has made it clear that universal health coverage cannot be achieved without an active role played by nurses and midwives (World Health Organization, 2015). The State of the World's Nursing Report aims to influence governments and their officials to invest in the development of the nursing practice and personnel. Seen through the eyes of a pandemic, government and health policy could not be persuaded more directly to take seriously the role and status of nurses and midwives in the health system and society.

In 2019, a report was published on the recruitment of nursing personnel and the effects thereof on patient safety and work safety for health professionals (Saudi Patient Safety Center & International Council of Nurses, 2019). Recommendations were presented in terms of the registered nurse-to-patient staffing ratio by respective fields of practice. The aim of such recommendations on safety standards and risks posed by “malnourished” staffing policies is to urge healthcare officials and healthcare funders to revise the existing staffing standards. In this context, Aiken et al. (2018) point out that at least 80% of all nursing personnel should hold a bachelor's degree, as the RN4CAST survey clearly showed that treatment outcomes were

better in patients treated by nurses with academic bachelor's degrees rather than those with professional bachelor's degrees (Aiken et al., 2014; 2017; 2018).

Traditional healthcare systems, especially in the eastern countries of the European Union, have struggled to meet the increasing demands for health services resulting from an aging society. These policies are predominantly aimed at solving problems pertaining to doctors, but fail to pay adequate attention to other professional profiles. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study (Maier et al., 2017) places the eastern countries of the European Union in the group of countries with the least developed advanced practice skills. Thus, in 2020 the new guidelines for advanced nursing practice prepared by the International Council of Nurses will certainly make a significant impact in the eastern countries of the European Union.

How to proceed?

As an expert and researcher in nursing and healthcare, I wish to convey the following message: the development of nursing as an advanced-level profession and a scientific discipline is becoming increasingly dependent on how it is perceived within the occupational group. Two distinct dimensions of perceiving nursing have to coincide – the scientific dimension of nursing care provision and the dimension of reflection on nursing practice. The first provides nurses with a master's or PhD education level with new knowledge to be tested in practice, while the second must serve as an imperative to researchers for scientific investigation and be categorized either in the field of nursing knowledge or, conversely, in the field of non-evidence-based practice. To achieve the latter, every nurse must possess the necessary knowledge to understand the importance of research resulting in scientific findings. Nurses should support development work in nursing and contribute to the exchange of evidence and findings from practice. That is how nursing will

retain the values which have historically shaped its relation to the healthy and the ill, advance nursing knowledge and practice, and add the values of scientific knowledge to nursing care, professional development, and evidence-based practice (Skela-Savič, 2017). Nursing managers should encourage the development of nursing as a profession in the field of research and evidence-based care and as a scientific discipline (Skela-Savič et al., 2016).

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