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INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY

Nurses key to healthy society, economy

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INTERNATIONAL Nurses Day was observed on Sunday. The theme for this year was "Our Nurses, Our Future: The Economic Power of Care". Nursing is the largest occupational group in the health sector, accounting for approximately 59% of all health-care professionals globally.

In keeping populations healthy and productive, nurses contribute to workforce stability and economic growth of any country. Further, the role of nurses in innovation and research drives advancements in health-care technologies and patient care delivery and significantly contributes to economic development.

At the heart of an efficient and well-functioning health system is a healthy workforce, which is a key driver for inclusive economic growth.

However, a healthy workforce should include an optimum skills mix, distribution, competencies, standards, support, and motivation to deliver essential services and contribute to universal health cover.

Through the diverse educational offerings in nursing, from undergraduate to doctoral studies, nurses are skilled, competent and highly sought-after professionals who fulfil the mandate to drive efficiency in health care. Through their work, they help to reduce hospital re-admissions, decrease length of stay, improve patient outcomes, promote patient safety and quality of care, and enhance overall performance of health-care delivery.

Nursing can be described as both an art and a science, a heart and a mind. Through critical thinking, nurses use their judgement to integrate objective data with subjective experiences of a patient's biological, physical and behavioural needs.

At the heart of nursing lies a fundamental respect for human dignity and the need to provide for the patient's needs. It is supported by the mind, as nursing requires rigorous core learning and development. Nursing is a service to mankind to prevent illness and disease, promote well-being and care for those in need.

Health-care settings and patients' rooms within a hospital are inherently stressful with noisy machines, bright lights and intimidating medical equipment and supplies. Within such an environment, a catalyst for balance is required, which is the nurse who is the



THE true value of nursing extends beyond the confines of hospitals and clinics; it touches the fabric of our communities and fosters a healthier and more resilient society, says the writer. | Independent Newspapers Archives

provider of care at the bedside.

Nurses ensure that the environment becomes a space where a patient can heal. Creating a healing environment begins with an awareness that through heart-centred practices, the nurse becomes the healing environment. This environment offers dignity, respect, understanding and empathy, combined with the ability to listen, tuning in to what is held in the space and paying attention to what is said beyond words. Becoming the healing environment means that each nurse brings what is needed, regardless of what the external environment offers.

Caring for others is the cornerstone of nursing and requires nurse practitioners to embrace humanity and show compassion and kindness for another's journey as well as their own. Being able to care for others is a privilege and allows us to be vulnerable and share our own journey and those of others. Nursing is about the care of people in all dimensions of being human. Thus, nurses do not only contribute to the fiscal economy but carry the economic power of care.

The true value of nursing thus extends beyond the confines of hospitals and clinics; it touches the fabric of our communities and fosters a healthier and more resilient society.

Despite their invaluable contributions, nurses continue to face systemic challenges, including staffing shortages, inadequate resources and burnout. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort from policy-makers, health-care administrators and the public alike. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: Target 3c advocates for an increase in health financing, recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce. The 2030 Global Human Resource Health Strategy of the World Health Organization extends the SDGs and recommends a paradigm shift in how countries plan, educate, deploy, manage and reward health workers.

Health-care organisations need to demonstrate support for the well-being of nurses. This can be achieved by integrating well-being into every facet of the organisation, from the mission and vision, policies, safety metrics

and attending to broken systems and processes.

On International Nurses Day and beyond, let our efforts to sustain and retain nurses as the most valuable asset in health care be a priority. Investment in nursing contributes to the economic value and societal benefits in any country. Let us recognise, value and respect the economic power of care of nurses and acknowledge them as an investment in the future, a cost that should not be minimised and neglected. In our celebrations, we should be honouring nurses for their dedication, expertise, compassion and care they invest into our health-care systems. We should reshape our thinking and acknowledge that nurses are the cornerstone of healthy societies and thriving economies.

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