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## **International Nurses Day: Honoring the Backbone of Healthcare Systems**

On May 12th each year, the world pays tribute to the unsung heroes of healthcare – nurses. This day not only commemorates the birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale but also recognises the pivotal role that nurses play in the delivery of healthcare services globally. International Nurses Day serves as a reminder of the dedication, compassion, and resilience exhibited by nurses in their daily work, as well as highlights the challenges they face, such as nursing shortages and the economic repercussions of such shortages.

Nurses serve as the cornerstone of the healthcare system, often being the first point of contact for patients seeking medical assistance. Beyond just administering clinical care, nurses provide emotional support, comfort, and reassurance to patients and their families during times of distress and uncertainty. Their multifaceted role involves not only providing direct patient care but also encompasses education, advocacy, and leadership within the healthcare setting.

Nurses act as crucial advocates for patient rights and welfare, playing a pivotal role in ensuring that patients receive quality care and are treated with dignity and respect. Their expertise and on-the-ground experience can lead to policy changes and innovations that improve the overall functioning of healthcare systems and enhance patient outcomes.

However, despite their indispensable contributions, healthcare systems in Europe and worldwide are grappling with a shortage of nurses. This shortage poses significant challenges, including increased workloads for existing nursing staff, reduced quality of patient care, heightened stress levels among nurses, and the potential for burnout and attrition within the nursing workforce.

From an economic standpoint, nursing shortages can have far-reaching implications. Increased healthcare costs may result from higher rates of missed care, extended lengths of hospital stays, and a strain on existing resources. Moreover, the financial burden of addressing nursing shortages can be substantial, further underscoring the importance of investing in nursing education and workforce development.

All these are highlighted by healthcare stakeholders and politicians and note the urgency in overcoming this “yesterday”.

To address the pressing issue of nursing shortages and ensure the sustainability of healthcare systems, there is a need for increased investment in nursing education and workforce development. By providing opportunities for aspiring nurses to receive quality education and training, healthcare organisations can bolster the pipeline of skilled nursing professionals and mitigate the impact of staffing shortages.

Moreover, fostering a supportive and conducive work environment for nurses is essential in retaining talent and preventing burnout. Implementing strategies such as mentorship programs, continuing education opportunities, and recognition initiatives can help boost morale, enhance job satisfaction, and ultimately improve the quality of patient care. Nursing professional bodies, through collaborative efforts, can enhance public awareness and advocate for increased support from policymakers, key stakeholders, and governments to invest in nursing and uphold the integrity of the nursing profession by making informed and essential decisions.

In conclusion, International Nurses Day serves as a poignant reminder of the invaluable contributions made by nurses in healthcare settings worldwide. As the backbone of healthcare systems, nurses play a critical role in ensuring the well-being and recovery of patients, advocating for best practices, and driving positive change within the healthcare sector. By addressing nursing shortages, investing in nursing education, and supporting the nursing workforce, we can honour nurses' dedication and fortitude while strengthening healthcare systems for the future.



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*The European Federation of Nurses' Associations (EFN) represents over 35 National Nurses' Associations and its work has an effect on the daily work of 6 million nurses throughout the European Union and Europe. The EFN is the independent voice of the nursing profession, and its mission is to strengthen the status and practice of the profession of nursing for the benefit of the health of the citizens and the interests of nurses in the EU & Europe.*

