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ICN and the WHO launch the Atlas of Nurses in Mental Health

Nurses in Mental Health: Always essential, needed everywhere, too often missing

Geneva, Switzerland, 13 September 2007 – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the World Health Organization (WHO) today announced the publication of the *Atlas: Nurses in Mental Health 2007*, with fresh data on the availability, education, training and role of nurses in mental health care worldwide. The most consistent and significant finding in the study is the severe shortage of nurses providing mental health care in most low and middle income countries, where the level of training in mental health is usually lower than in high income countries.

“The unacceptable lack of adequate opportunities for training in mental health during basic nursing education and continuing professional development is revealed in this important publication”, stated Judith Oulton, Chief Executive Officer of ICN.

“There is no health without mental health. New research highlighting the neglect of the mentally ill in developing countries where nurses are the vast majority of the health care workforce makes it imperative that we rectify the situation and increase access to mental health training for this essential human resource.” Research recently published in the *Lancet* indicated that 90% of those suffering from mental health disorders in developing countries receive no care. The research also illuminated how poor mental health is directly linked to other health problems^[1].

ICN and its member national nurses associations remain deeply concerned about the quality and continuity of treatment and care for people with mental and behavioural disorders. This concern extends to the needs of their families and communities, and the stigma and discrimination associated with people suffering mental health disorders and their caregivers, including health professionals.

The *Atlas* is a timely and a useful tool for governments, policy makers, national nurses associations and others in informing policy and strategic directions to improve mental health of their populations. ICN calls on WHO, governments and others to act on the evidence-based recommendations of the *Atlas*:

- 1) To recognise nurses as essential human resources for mental health.
- 2) To ensure that adequate numbers of trained nurses are available to provide mental health care, and

^[1] The *Lancet*, *Lancet Series on Global Health*, September 2007

- 3) To incorporate mental health into the basic and post basic nursing education.

The Atlas: Nurses in Mental Health 2007 can be accessed free of charge on the ICN website at www.icn.ch/bookshop.htm

Editor's note

The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of 129 national nurses' associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses for nurses since 1899, ICN is the international voice of nursing and works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

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