

International health professional associations present first-ever guidelines on incentives for health professionals

Geneva, Switzerland, 20 May 2008 - The world's leading health and hospital professional associations have joined to produce the first-ever joint guidelines on incentives for the retention and recruitment of health professionals.

Commissioned by the **Global Health Workforce Alliance** as part of its work to identify and implement solutions to the health workforce crisis, the *Guidelines on Incentives for Health Professionals* is the combined result of collaboration between the **International Council of Nurses, the International Hospital Federation, the International Pharmaceutical Federation, the World Confederation for Physical Therapy, the World Dental Federation and the World Medical Association.**

Underlining both financial and non-financial incentives as critical to ensuring effective recruitment, retention and performance of health workers across the world, the *Guidelines on Incentives* describe different approaches taken by a number of countries. Examples of financial incentives cited include tax waivers, allowances (e.g. - housing, clothing, child care, remote location weighting etc.), insurance, and performance payments. Examples of non financial incentives include ensuring positive work environments, flexibility in employment arrangements and support for career development.

The report underlines how incentives are important levers that organizations can use to attract, retain, motivate and improve the performance of their staff in all professions and walks of life, This is especially and urgently needed in the health care sector, it states, where the growing gap between the supply of health care professionals and the demand for their services is reaching crisis levels in many countries. The *'Incentives'* guidelines offer practical solutions that can make a difference. Professional associations will implement the guidelines by using the research to support claims and raise awareness of all stakeholders including patients.

The serious shortage of health workers across the world has been identified as one of the most critical constraints to the achievement of health and development goals. The 2006 World Health Report estimated a global shortage of 4.3 million health workers, including 2.4 million physicians, nurses and midwives. Translated into access to care, the shortage means that over a billion people have no access to health care professionals.

"Health workers are the cornerstone and drivers of health systems. The production of these guidelines is part of a global effort to ensure that health workers are ensured the conditions they deserve to be able to perform their critical duties, working towards the goal of access to health workers for all," said Dr Mubashar Sheikh, Executive Director of the Global Health Workforce Alliance.

The *Guidelines on Incentives for Health Professionals* is available on the GWA website at www.who.int/workforcealliance

Hiroko Minami, President of the International Council of Nurses: “International trade in services agreements impact the public and health professionals and it is important that health professional associations be consulted by governments prior to and during negotiations, whether regional, bilateral or global. It is critical that ministries of health be part of any negotiations concerning health and the health professions.”

Burton Conrod, President of the FDI World Dental Federation: “We expect the health professions as well as the public to play a major role whenever professional regulation is under discussion. We are confident that self-regulation offers the most effective way of protecting the public. There is no evidence to demonstrate that other models are any better.”

Jon Snaedal, President of the World Medical Association: “It is no coincidence that at a time when there is a shortage of health professionals around the world self-regulation is being challenged by governments. Limiting the freedom of health professions to self regulate should not be seen by governments as a way of solving the problem.”

Marilyn Moffat, President of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy: “The WHPA will build on this highly successful conference by providing information and tools for national health professional associations to strengthen self-regulation and consult with their governments. The World Confederation for Physical Therapy and the International Council of Nurses have already produced model practice acts relating to regulation that can be used as guides.”

Kamal Midha, President of the International Pharmaceutical Federation: “The WHPA will now consider holding another similar conference to follow up the issues we heard this weekend. The public needs to be aware that self-regulation is an effective way of stimulating good practice and preventing poor practice in the interests of the patient.” The full recording of the conference will also be available via the WHPA website 19 May 2008.

* The World Health Professions Alliance, speaking for more than 23 million health care professionals worldwide, assembles essential knowledge and experience from the key health care professions. The WHPA aims to facilitate collaboration between key health professionals and major international stakeholders such as governments, policy makers and the World Health Organization.

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Editor's Note:

- The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.
- The **International Hospital Federation (IHF)** is an international nongovernmental organisation supported by members from over 100 countries. As the worldwide body for hospitals and health care organisations, it develops and maintains a spirit of cooperation and communication among them, with the primary goal of improving patient safety and promoting health in underserved communities.
- The **International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP)** is the global federation of the national organisations of pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists. Pharmacists are health professionals dedicated to improving the access to and value of appropriate medicine use.
- The **World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT)** is a federation of 101 national physical therapy associations and represents physical therapists worldwide. It works to improve global health by encouraging high standards of physical therapy research, education and practice; supporting communication and exchange of information among WCPT regions and member organisations; and collaborating with national and international organisations.
- The **World Dental Federation (FDI)** is the authoritative, worldwide voice of dentistry with more than 150 member associations in 134 countries around the world, representing more than 900,000 dentists internationally.
- The **World Medical Association (WMA)** is the global federation of national medical associations representing the millions of physicians worldwide. Acting on behalf of physicians and patients, the WMA endeavours to achieve the highest possible standards of medical science, education, ethics and health care for all people.
- The **Global Health Workforce Alliance (GHWA)** is a partnership dedicated to identifying and implementing solutions to the health workforce crisis. It brings together a variety of actors, including national governments, civil society, finance institutions, workers, international agencies, academic institutions and professional associations. The alliance is hosted and administered by the World Health Organization.

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