

World Health Day: Time To Recognise And Honour Nursing Staff

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Globally COVID-19 has taken centre stage, with clinicians , modellers, politicians and battling it out to find solutions. Yet there is a least recognised and important hero engaged in fighting against COVID-91 globally; Yes the Nursing Staff.

This World Health Day, it is time to recognise and honour the contribution of nurses and midwives, distinguishing their vital role in keeping the world healthy.

Nurses along with other health workers are working as front line warriors against COVID-19, putting their health at risk to protect the broader community. Comprising more than two-thirds of the healthcare workforce in the WHO Western Pacific Region, nurses are critical in responding to health needs in all settings and across the lifespan.

The 2020 International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, World Health Day is an opportunity to highlight issues, challenges and possible solutions to the work of the nursing workforce.

Every day while community watches debate across Corona crisis on all platform be it print media , social media almost everyone in this country Politicians, Doctors, Paediatricians, Gynaecologists, media personnel, Programme Managers , Celebrities , Video-Radio Jockeys can be seen sharing their opinions, except for nurses, who are busy in demonstrating a new level of leadership during the coronavirus crisis but are also at risk of being left traumatized as a result of their experiences.

Many of us who followed the Nipha outbreak must still have fresh memories of the last few lines from Lini (A Nurse from Kerala engaged in fight against Nipha)) *“I don't think I can meet you again, sorry,”* wrote 28-year-old nurse Lini to her husband, as her health deteriorated. It was a metaphor of the reality of the hard life that is least appreciated and recognised from the real unsung heroes of healthcare.

With available shreds of evidence on the healthcare workforce available , if data is to be believed there are only 1.7 nurses available per thousand population in India against a recommendation of 2.5 nurses per thousand population by the World Health Organisation. The nurse to patient ratio at 1:20 in public hospitals in India does not even match well with international standards of 1:4. This possibly adds to work overload and unimaginable demotivation. Short staffing patterns especially in private setups often result in long working hours and might decline efficient nursing care.

They are the first line of defence and majority of many times first responders to critical care. Their profession makes them vulnerable and high risk to various communicable illnesses like tuberculosis, Hepatitis, HIV, etc. yet they are not given much-needed appreciation and credits which they deserve especially in Our country.

There are anecdotal evidence that Nursing staff are treated with a very little dignity.

The recently highlighted incident at a hospital from Northern India were suspected of COVID-19 were quarantined, found making levied comments and bothering the nursing staff of the hospital is a reflection of psych of few individuals towards these unsung heroes.

Nurses are also prone for possible mental harassments in the form of threats, verbal abuse and hostility from patients as well as patients relatives. The services rendered by Nurses to the ailing patients do not receive proper recognition not only from the society but sometimes also from other health care professionals in the medical field. They are not accepted as leaders or administrators in their fields without citing any valid or justifiable reason.

Nurses are often expected or forced to carry out other work which might not be directly related to routine professional work for which they are trained like billing,

record keeping, inventory, laundry, diet, physiotherapy, Insurance etc., thereby diminishing time for quality patient care.

Nurses are also prone for various health hazards largely due to poor training in occupational health safety along with indifferent leadership at health care facilities.

Nurses are a symbol of pride, prestige and perfect combination of clinical skills with great emotional intelligence and sense of responsibilities. Nurses are going to be on the forefront for changing the healthcare landscape with an in surge into the transition of disease pattern globally and locally, emergence and re-emergence of new infectious diseases, technology taking centre stage, Ayushman Bharat and Universal health care in place, push for NABH, increasing patient literacy on their rights, enhanced public-private partnership and corporatization of healthcare and emergence of COVID-19 like infections , nurses should be on the forefront leading the change in healthcare landscape.

Despite all the challenges the future for the nursing profession can be vibrant but it requires targeted efforts in transformational leadership at all levels of Nursing by maximising the leadership capacity of those posted in small PHC to big corporate hospitals. The need of the hour for young nursing scholars is to get more hands-on with new domains like better patient engagement, next level of learnings for integration and learning into efficient business models, becoming entrepreneurs , managers and administrators by developing understanding of better management, finance and administrations.

They should also leverage upon better understanding of technology to support requisite clinical endeavors.

They need to explore domains like research, public health management and hospital administration & management. Nurses should also feel a sense of pride on being an active part of the team to achieve better health outcomes.

Kudos to WHO, for including Nurses in the larger theme of WHO day 2020 , I sincerely hope and Wish that they along with Midwives and other front line workers like ASHA get the much needed applause and recognition towards their services to the well being of the Nation.

Source:- Thequint Website (6th April 2020)

<https://www.thequint.com/fit/world-health-day-time-to-recognise-and-honour-nursing-staff>