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Safe staffing, social justice and gender advocacy raised as key issues for nursing

Barcelona, Spain; Geneva, Switzerland; 1 June 2017 – Key speakers from around the world addressed participants at the International Council of Nurses (ICN) Congress in Barcelona, Spain, highlighting the need for evidence to lobby governments to invest in nursing; as well as the key role of gender in this female-dominated profession.



Dr Linda Aiken, Director of the Centre for Health Outcomes and Policy Research at the University of Pennsylvania, received a standing ovation for her presentation on safe staffing. As one of the most recognised leaders in the field of research and evidence, Dr Aiken spoke about the importance of evidence and bringing it to governments. She presented findings of studies of 30 countries that show the important impact of nurse staffing on patient outcomes. “Hospitals that have evidence based staffing have the lowest mortality at the same or lower price,” she explained. “Now is the time for us to act on the basis of the evidence we have!”

Michael Riordan, Senior advisor to the Queensland Minister of Health, received a huge applause by starting his speech saying. “Forget the doctors, health is all about nurses.” He

spoke about the Queensland governments campaign to reduce violence in the health workplace and the current discussions at the Queensland parliament to impose a six-month mandatory prison sentence for anyone assaulting a health office during the performance of their duties. Riordan also spoke about two other initiatives in Queensland: mandated patient to nurse ratios and nurse navigators to help those suffering from chronic conditions, resulting in better patient outcomes.

Riordan quoted the ICN's document "Nurses: A Voice to Lead: Nurses' Role in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals" saying it was an impressive piece of work. He quoted a key message of the document: "The underlying dynamic in all of this is one of social justice. We should learn about and contribute to the SDGs because it is the right thing to do."

Examples of safe staffing also came from Wales, China, and Spain. Jean White, the Chief Nursing Officer of Wales, discussed her experience and progress in addressing some of the issues of quality and safety through safe staffing measure, citing the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act of 2016. She was followed by Liming You, Professor at Sun Yat-sen University School of Nursing, who spoke about raising the social status and prestige of the nursing profession and increasing the attractiveness of a nursing career. Finally, Amelia Amézcua Sánchez from the Spanish Nursing Union spoke about the necessity to reframe the discourse on nursing investment, and how we need to consider nursing as a gain to society and to the economy.



The afternoon session focused on advocacy and gender with Katja Iversen, President & CEO of Women Deliver, an advocacy organisation, who encouraged nurses to think beyond their own lives, to influence the health agenda and to seize power. "Be catalyst, be a team player and know your audience she said "But don't wait to be handed the power – take it!"

Raquel Rodriguez Llanos, President of the Nursing College of Cáceres, asked a question of the delegates: Does being a man or a woman affect us as nurses? To answer this question, Dr Rodriguez Llanos discussed the effect of gender on professionalization, citing social expectations of women, the "double day" (a job at home and a job at work), and the risks presented by the working environment. She went on to talk about the impact of gender on health, including mental health, on workload and on absenteeism, due to the burden of responsibilities at home.

A final highlight of the day was the Florence Nightingale International Foundation Fundraising Luncheon where the recipient of the 2017 International Achievement Award, Dr Nancy Glass, an American nurse and researcher in women's health, spoke about her research on ending violence against women and girls globally. The Luncheon was the largest one every held by the Foundation, with 750 guests, raising over $15,000.

Note for Editors

The **International Council of Nurses** (ICN) is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

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