

Editorial

2020: The Year of the Nurse and the Midwife

For the first time in history, the countries of the world will unite in 2020 to celebrate their nurses and midwives, highlighting the contribution of nurses and midwives in the delivery of healthcare service. For twelve months the focus will not only be on politics and all the wrongdoings of others, but we can focus on the professions which are embedded with compassion and caring – nursing by nurses and midwives serving human needs.

In January of 2019, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) said: “WHO is proud to nominate 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. These two health professions are invaluable to the health of people everywhere. Without nurses and midwives, we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals or universal health coverage. While WHO recognises their crucial role on a daily basis, 2020 will be dedicated to highlighting the enormous sacrifices and contributions of nurses and midwives, and to ensuring that we address the shortage of these vital professions.”¹

In reaction to the announcement, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) President, Annette Kennedy said: “The 20 million nurses around the world will be thrilled to see their profession recognised in this way. I would like to congratulate WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus for his farsightedness and wisdom in seeing the benefit of highlighting the contribution of nurses to health care, and the WHA members for making his vision become a reality.”

She said the designation of 2020 was especially welcome as it coincides with the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, one of the founders of modern nursing. “Florence Nightingale used her lamp to illuminate the places where nurses worked, and I hope the designation of 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife will provide us with a new, 20-20 vision of what nursing is in the modern era, and how nurses can

light the way to universal health coverage and health care for all.”²

Nursing Now, a three-year global campaign (2018–2020), aims to improve health by raising the profile and status of nursing worldwide. Nursing Now runs in collaboration with the WHO and the ICN. In order to promote international support of young nurses and midwives, Nursing Now has launched the **Nightingale Challenge 2020**. This Challenge calls for every healthcare employer to provide leadership and development training for 20 young nurses and midwives throughout 2020. The aim is to have at least 20 000 young nurses and midwives benefitting from leadership training, as well as to act as a catalyst for worldwide investment into the next generation of nurses and midwives, to allow them to reach their full potential.¹

The nurses of South Africa are actively involved in campaigns and celebrations to improve the health and well-being of the population with organising, planning and executing activities scheduled on the Department of Health Annual Health Calendar. It is, however, time for our nurses to also participate in the global challenge and to motivate employers to invest in the leadership and development training of young nurses and midwives. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be part of a challenge with only winners; just imagine the impetus that this leadership development challenge will contribute to our health system. Let us all take hands and ensure that South Africa will be a winner in the Nightingale Challenge 2020!

References

1. <https://nurseslabs.com/2020-as-year-of-the-nurse-and-midwife-to-go-ahead-globally/>
2. <https://www.nursingnow.org/2020-the-year-of-the-nurse-and-the-midwife/> Frankel Andrew, Aug 24, 2011, What leadership styles should senior nurses develop?