

NURSING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN MEXICO

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Health practitioners have been a fundamental asset in facing the COVID-19 pandemic since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared international public health emergency, on January 30th, 2020. Nurses, doctors, psychologists, and other professionals have adopted effective strategies in this scenario, at an attempt to protect people's health and save lives. COVID-19 pandemic evidenced the urgent need to strengthen the assistance capacity of health practitioners all over the world, which is why WHO and partners made an urgent appeal for investment in nurses. In the minutes of the meeting held in Geneva in April 2020, WHO highlighted some significant problems in the nursing workforce, pointing out some major areas to be invested in, such as training, employment, and leadership, to strengthen the nursing team all over the world and to defend and improve everyone's life quality and health⁽¹⁾.

Moreover, concerned about such problems and needs in so many areas, OPAS, in the report "World's Nursing Situation 2020", requests that all governments invested more in education, improved working conditions, and strengthened leadership to better the nurses' contributions to health systems⁽²⁾. This has not been an easy task for health professional training agencies, which transformed educational methods to employ better teaching strategies focused on strengthening attention to health, despite the pandemic conditions.

On the other hand, international representatives from different areas have undertaken the task to survey the several needs in which health practitioners, particularly nurses, are involved. Therefore, WHO, in collaboration with the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and campaign Nursing Now, appeal to governments for more investment in nursing education, job generation and leadership promotion, at an attempt to have enough professionals, with proper abilities to foster an equitable and sustainable health assistance.

Mexico was no exception to these demands. The Mexican Government shows that, historically, due to the pandemic, they were able to recruit 45,000 health professionals⁽³⁾, doctors and nurses, to promote the professional care demanded on the daily life of patients with COVID-19. Hence, it follows that nurses play a crucial role in the health team.

Data from the Ministry of Health of Mexico demonstrated that in August 2020, the new Coronavirus has contaminated 97,632 health professionals, out of which, 41% are nurses⁽⁴⁾. Furthermore, an alarming fact

is that a higher number of deaths also relates to health professionals that take care of infected people. Mexico accounted for 1,320 deaths of health professionals in August 2020, which, according to the International Amnesty, was the highest rate in the world. Likewise, these numbers reveal that the highest rate of infections is among nurses (47%), followed by doctors (30%)⁽⁵⁾.

In this scenario, thousands of Mexican nurses and doctors stand still on the front line of the war against the coronavirus, and, unfortunately, infections and death of nursing professionals are currently at high rates. However, it is worth mentioning that these numbers result from multiple factors, such as the weak safety measures to which health professionals are submitted, long working hours, high number of infected patients in hospitals, lack of material and equipment for assistance, permanent stress due to the uncertainty of the future of the pandemic. This situation is not far from the other countries, where similar conditions are found. However, health professionals have remained in this battlefield, with fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and the constant risk of exposure to the coronavirus, to care for and save the life of people who have been affected by this disease.

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