Transformational Nurse Leaders Key to Strengthening Health Systems Worldwide

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This column, presented by the director of the International Council of Nurses (ICN), discusses the work of the ICN over the past 20 years and into the future in developing nursing leaders across the globe. Dr Ferguson relates this activity to the constructs of the Magnet Recognition Program. The ICN is at the forefront of making sure nurses and nurse executives have the knowledge, skills, and ability to lead effectively worldwide and meet the global health challenges.

Meeting the world’s global health challenges will not be achieved without nurses leading the way. As the largest healthcare professional group and backbone of the majority of all health systems in the world, nurses will have to care for more people living with noncommunicable, chronic, infectious, and emerging diseases. The future work of nurses will include caring for people with the adverse health effects of climate change, disasters, and wars. Global health challenges will affect populations, health systems, and health and human resources.

Transformational nurse leaders will need to develop innovations and evidence-based strategies and policies to strengthen health systems worldwide and increase human resources to meet current and future global health challenges. Nurse leaders and nurses will play a critical role in the implementation of universal health coverage and the implementation and evaluation of the United Nations post-2015 sustainable development goals. The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is at the forefront of making sure nurses and nurse executives have the knowledge, skills, and ability to lead effectively worldwide and meet global health challenges. ICN has been an international pioneer in leadership, management, and negotiation skill development for nurses for more than 20 years through the highly successful ICN Leadership for Change (LFC) and ICN Leadership in Negotiation programs (http://leadership.icn.ch/).

The ICN LFC program is a copyrighted and trademarked action-learning leadership capacity-building program that has been active since 1996 and implemented in more than 70 countries. The vision of the ICN LFC program is that 21st-century nurses will have the knowledge, strategies, and abilities to lead and manage in complex and dynamic nursing and health service arenas. These nurse leaders will influence the development of the profession and the advancement of health and social policies toward healthier futures for all populations. The 1-year leadership program implements a tested and evaluated 5-prong methodology consisting of 2 workshops, team projects, individual development planning, mentoring,
and learning activities. Upon completion of the workshops, ICN faculty implement a 2-day monitoring and evaluation meeting including a graduation ceremony. Graduates qualify for International Continuing Nursing Education Credits after graduation. By the end of a program, participants will

- be familiar with public sector and health reform/redesign proposals, developments, issues, and implications in their country and region;
- have a clear understanding of social, political, and economic impacts on health;
- understand the requirements for effective organizations, leadership, and management, and have developed skills to enhance all of these;
- have developed their leadership skills and attributes and demonstrated the application of these through tangible results;
- be able to articulate the value of nursing to key stakeholders;
- understand how nursing can contribute to health and social policy development and have developed skills to make themselves more effective in this role;
- be strategic and analytical in their thinking, oriented to results, and proactive in developing strategies that contribute to health and service improvement;
- be more effective both as change agents and in managing planned and unplanned change;
- have developed strategies to influence curricula and regulatory change;
- have developed strategies for succession planning and the preparation of other future nurse leaders;
- have become active participants in relevant networks and mentoring relationships and be actively mentoring others; and
- have developed, implemented, and evaluated a team project, and planned for continued sustainability of outcomes (http://leadership.icn.ch/lfc/).

What Links the ICN Leadership Programs With the ANCC Magnet Recognition Program?

Many of the participants in the ICN leadership programs are chief nursing officers (CNOs) on a journey to transform health systems and improve population health outcomes in their nations. In the ICN LFC program, the ANCC Magnet Recognition Program is highlighted as 1 of the best models for excellence in nursing services. Wolf et al2 said it best: “The journey to Magnet” designation begins with transformational leadership.2(p31) Several ICN LFC graduates have been instrumental in the achievement of Magnet designation in their nations or are currently on the journey. These include LFC graduates from Singapore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Jordan.

On January 27, 2015, the 1st ICN LFC program ever conducted in the United States celebrated the graduation of 17 senior nurse leaders and human resource for health executives from 9 United States-affiliated Pacific Island countries and territories in Honolulu, Hawai‘i, on the campus of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Composed of 15 women and 2 men, this dynamic group of graduates included CNOs, human resource executives, and finance officials of various health ministries from American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Pohnpei, Yap, and Kosrae), Guam, Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (Majuro and Ebeye).

This ICN LFC program was a collaborative partnership among ICN, the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Nursing (UH MHN), Pacific Island Health Officers Association, and the American Pacific Nursing Leaders Council. ICN is working to continue capacity building in our Training of Trainers phase of the ICN LFC program so that new LFC programs can be implemented in the United States Affiliated Pacific Islands and led by the newly certified ICN LFC trainers in collaboration with the UH MHN. ICN encourages the American Nurses Association (ANA) members of the United States and North Pacific Islands to continue their leadership development through the ANA Leadership Institute (http://www.ana-leadershipinstitute.org/), which offers tools and resources to strengthen the leadership capacity of nurse leaders.

The ICN-Burdett Global Nursing Leadership Institute

The ICN-Burdett Global Nursing Leadership Institute (GNLI), launched in 2009, presents the 3rd component of ICN’s leadership development strategy. The GNLI provides a leadership program for nurses in senior- and executive-level positions. Facilitated and taught by transformational leaders, the GNLI uses an action-learning approach in a collaborative and stimulating learning culture. Participants review and enhance their leadership skills and behaviors related to national and global health priorities. In May 2013, ICN launched the GNLI colloquium to give all Institute alumni the opportunity to easily network and exchange information and to allow ICN to capture outcomes and best practice exemplars in global health (www.icn.ch/pillarsprograms/global-nursing-leadership-institute/).

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Research and Education at the Mount Sinai Hospital (MSH) in New York City, is an ICN-Burdett GNLI alumna and a Magnet CNO. Since her participation in the GNLI, the MSH Center for Nursing Research and Education has worked with more than 200 global nursing leaders to enhance their leadership capacity in nursing research and education. Carole is involved in the development of a new, state-of-the-art biocontainment unit at MSH in preparation for the management of Ebola patients in the United States. She has incorporated the use of simulated education of the clinical teams while in full PPE (personal protective equipment). She also included the observations and education gleaned from these sessions to make the practice safer for MSH staff and patients. MSH has just been identified as 1 of 35 hospitals in the United States designated as treatment centers for Ebola patients. Carole is an example of how transformational nurse leaders can strengthen health systems worldwide.

The key to strengthening health systems worldwide is transformational nurse leaders. The ANCC Magnet Recognition Program offers a global road map for transformational nurse leaders to create and sustain innovative nurse-led health and social outcomes. For a transformational leader, the journey always continues. Continued leadership development is a must for transformational nurse leaders to continue to review and change in the context of future global health to ensure coverage, safe population healthcare, and excellence in nursing services.

References