

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S NOTE

The Nigerian Nurse: Delivering Quality Services Despite Increasing Challenges

Nurses are very important professionals in the health care system. They are the coordinators of patient care in the health care facilities. They constitute the single largest professional group in the healthcare delivery system across the world. There are four fundamental responsibilities of the nurse as outlined by the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and endorsed by the W.H.O. The responsibilities are (a) to promote health (b) to alleviate suffering (c) to restore health and (d) to prevent illness. The implication of these responsibilities is that nurses are required at all levels of the health care system providing their services and coordinating patient care. Nursing care is a key indicator for quality health care.

Nursing is a profession guided by unique knowledge, attitude, practical skills and regulations. These attributes enable the nurse to care and assist individuals, families and communities to attain, recover or maintain health or to die peacefully. Nurses and midwives work in environments that contribute to workplace adversities including poor remuneration, intimidation and lack of recognition. This generates perceptions of the workplace as being potentially damaging to nurses and midwives. Nurses all over the world and especially in Nigeria are increasingly facing problems arising from national shortage of nurses, poor working conditions, increasing disease burdens and growing number of people with complex social and physical healthcare needs present increasing demands for the nurses and the nursing profession. In Nigeria, politics in the health care system, lack of equity in governments' attention to the various professionals in the healthcare system and inter-professional conflicts are additional challenges facing the nurses and the healthcare system. Although several administrative and research reports have shown low morale and stressful working conditions among nurses in Nigeria, little or nothing has been done to address the issues. These among other reasons have been responsible for the nurses' continuing migration from Nigeria in search of greener pastures and proper recognition in many parts of the world.

Despite these challenges, nurses in Nigeria remain in the profession and in the country, not just for economic gain but because they are genuinely interested in caring particularly for the Nigerian people. To achieve universal health coverage and other government health and development agenda, there is need for the establishment of clear and implementable policies that will address the issues of nursing education, job creation including enhanced conditions of service, service delivery and leadership in nursing and healthcare. This will help reduce the rate of nurses migration to other countries thus, improving the quality of healthcare services in the country.

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