

The Role of the World Health Organization Collaborating Centers: Perspectives of Future Global Nurse Leaders

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The forces of globalization have shifted the way that healthcare is delivered and also how the global nursing workforce is conceptualized.^{1,2} Globally, the demand for healthcare is increasing, outpacing the growth in the workforce, primarily because of population growth, the aging population, and the increasing burden of noncommunicable diseases.³ This gap is known

as the human resources for health crisis (HRH crisis).⁴ The deficits in the healthcare workforce are attributed to the aging healthcare workforce, experienced professionals leaving for better paying jobs, and labor migration both within and across countries.⁵ Moreover, globally, nursing workforce numbers are highly susceptible to political pressures, and a consistent workforce strategy has not been widely applied.⁶ Low- and middle-income countries experience an even greater workforce burden due to increasing demands for healthcare and are much more vulnerable to migration factors and the influence of pandemics.⁷ As more countries make a commitment for universal healthcare coverage, the demand for healthcare will continue to increase, and the HRH crisis will become even more acute. High-income countries are also not immune to this crisis as the demand for healthcare continues to grow in the face of and fiscal constraints.

Globally, nurses are the largest component of any health-care system. Some estimates suggest that nurses are 80% of the world's workforce. The care provided by nurses is deemed essential for meeting development goals and delivering high-quality, safe, and effective care.² Supply and demand contribute to an uneven distribution of nursing resources, which exacerbates the problems of increased demands for healthcare.⁸ Nursing workforce shortages often have the greatest impact on the healthcare system in low- and middle-income countries. The shortage of nursing resources impacts, not only a healthcare system, but also the healthcare of populations.² Therefore, nurses are deemed an important part of the solution for the HRH crisis.

Globally, countries are renewing their commitments to developing action plans for addressing the HRH crisis. During November of 2013 at the Third Global Forum for Human Resources for Health, held in Brazil, member states adopted the *Recife Political Declaration on Human Resources for Health* (2013) and renewed their commitment to universal healthcare coverage.^{9,10} The WHO is committed to sustaining the momentum by establishing an independent advisory committee on HRH reporting directly to the director-general. The Recife Declaration (2013) sets forth key points for a country's action plans to address the HRH crisis.

Ensuring a competent, credentialed, and committed workforce requires much more adequate numbers of nurses. It also requires ensuring nurses have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies to work in a global world.¹¹ Global nurse competencies are critical whether working domestically or an international context.¹² These competencies hinge on valuing diversity and cultural pluralism as well as the social, political and economic factors that contribute to health outcomes. Recognizing these factors has compelled nursing schools across the globe to increase the focus on programs for preparing a committed cadre of nurses who will be competent to practice in a global world. The role of leadership and advocacy are key foci of these programs because of the need to work with complex, political environments.¹³

The purpose of this paper is to describe student engagement in the Johns Hopkins University Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Center (CC) for Nursing Knowledge, Information Management and Sharing. Embedded in the Center for Global Innovation, the CC is an effective strategy to integrate global nursing and leadership opportunities into the nursing programs.

The goals and activities of the CC are described, and the voices of the interns are included, which provide a description of their global learning and leadership experiences.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION COLLABORATING CENTER

The WHO CCs have been in existence for more than 60 years, with the first being established shortly after the WHO's establishment in 1947, the World Influenza Centre in London for worldwide epidemiological surveillance. In 1949, the Second World Health Assembly implemented the

long-standing policy: "that WHO should not establish centres under its auspices, but instead it should support 'research in the field by assisting, coordinating, and making use of existing institutions'."¹⁴ Therefore, all CCs, have been established under this policy. It is likely that this policy has enhanced the national participation in the centers. A WHO CC is an institution designated by the director-general of WHO to form a part of an international collaborative network in support of the programs at the country, intercountry, regional, interregional, and global levels.

Today, there are 700 academic and scientific institutions supporting WHO CCs in over 80 countries. Designated CCs participate in strengthening a country's resources in terms of information services, research, and training, all in support of national health development. The CCs are grouped together under regional health organizations such as the PAHO and also into networks of designated CCs with similar research and expertise that further enhance and leverage the activities with the aim of improving health.

THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF WHO COLLABORATING CENTRES FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

This network of the WHO Nursing CC was established in 1990 as an independent, international, nonprofit, voluntary organization composed of worldwide WHO CCs as members. The vision of the network is health for all through nursing and midwifery excellence. The mission of the network is to maximize the contributions of nursing and midwifery in order to advance states, CCs, nongovernment organizations, and others interested in promoting the health of populations. This network brings together 42 WHO Nursing and Midwifery CCs as well as internationally renowned nursing and midwifery leaders. The nursing CCs are located in continents and countries across the globe.

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PAHO/WHO COLLABORATING CENTRE

The WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Information, Knowledge Management and Sharing was originally designated in 2001. The CC was originally a part of the Institute for Johns Hopkins Nursing, a partnership between The Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and The Johns Hopkins Hospital. Goals of the CC included: creating equitable access to information and scientific knowledge using appropriate and feasible technologies; promoting the Global Alliance for Nursing and Midwifery (GANM) through information management methodologies; contributing to the growth, development, and deployment of learning and informed online environments to improve nursing, and healthcare globally; and collaborating in the planning and conducting and disseminating research to improve health, nursing, and healthcare through the collection of data, information, and knowledge of nursing practice. The resources available to support the CC include the expertise of Johns Hopkins nurses and faculty, the Center for Global Health, and the leadership of the university. In 2013, the CC was embedded within the Johns Hopkins University School of

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