

CONFERENCE REPORT

**INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES:
25th Quadrennial Congress
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INTRODUCTION

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) held its 25th Quadrennial Congress from 18–23 May 2013 in Melbourne, Australia. This is one of the largest conferences for nurses and it is held every four years. The theme for 2013 was based on the outgoing president’s vision, namely: “Equity and access to healthcare”.

The main objectives of the Congress were:

- To advance and improve equity and access to healthcare;
- To demonstrate the nursing contribution to the health of individuals, families and communities;
- To provide opportunities for an in-depth exchange of experience and expertise within and beyond the international nursing community.

The keynote addresses were as follows:

- Equity and Access to Health Care: Speaker: Michel Kazatchkine (France)
- Holding Up More than Half the Sky: Speaker: Leslie Mancuso (USA)
- MDGs: Running the Final Stretch: Speaker: Joy Ngozi Ezelo (Nigeria)
- Obesity: Personal or Social Responsibility: Speaker: Joseph Proietto (Australia)

PAPERS DELIVERED AT THE CONFERENCE

More than 4 000 nurses from approximately 120 countries attended the conference. Three hundred papers were presented and 100 posters were on display.

The conference presentations highlighted the importance of equity and access to healthcare for communities and individuals. The presentations emphasised that nurses perform key roles to ensure equal access and quality of healthcare for all. The congress provided a global platform for the dissemination of nursing knowledge and leadership across specialities, cultures and countries via the ICN scientific programme.

It was evident from the presentations that many countries encounter problems of equity and uneven access to healthcare. People are still deprived of basic health needs which delay the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The sub-themes such as migration, the regulatory framework, nursing education, leadership for change and nursing ethics were also discussed.

The delegates' presentations covered the whole spectrum of the themes of the congress. It emerged that access to health care and migration are global problems which are experienced by all. This was also compounded by nurse shortages and poor retention strategies. There was no solution to curb the movement of nurses from one region to another. The emphasis in most presentations was on ethical recruitment and paying compensation to source countries, which are supplying the trained nurses.

The authors' oral presentation titled "Migration: closing the gates for African nurses" was well received by the audience. It was based on the challenges that are faced by nurses from Southern Africa when relocating either as a family or as an individual. The bilateral agreements prohibit nurses from working in any country because that is seen as poaching nurses from another country. This agreement is binding, which means that the available skills are not utilised although there is a global shortage of nurses.

Accolades were shared with Prof Thupayagale-Tshweneagae as her paper was selected from the journal *International Nursing Review* and showcased during the presentation of the ICN's chief executive officer, Mr David Benton, at the ICN exhibition stand and also during the writing workshop as an example of a multimedia article. This really put the University of South Africa (Unisa) and South Africa on the international map.

CLOSING CEREMONY

The new ICN board was elected and the outgoing board was thanked for its exceptional work during the past four years. The nursing associations are always encouraged and motivated to improve the healthcare systems in their countries. The Mauritian Nurses Association (ANA) won the best award, followed by Spain and Canada. The next conference will be held in Seoul, Korea in 2014.

More information about the *International Nursing Review*, the journal published by the ICN, as well about the upcoming ICN conferences can be obtained from www.icn.ch.