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SECOND WHO MEETING OF GOVERNMENT CHIEF NURSES FROM THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT STATES

Report on a WHO Meeting

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
24-26 August 1994

ABSTRACT

Development of nursing and midwifery is relevant to the improvement of health in the European Region and is particularly important in the newly independent states (NIS) of the former USSR. The meeting was the second of a series in the Russian language, begun in 1993 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, when government chief nurses from NIS and staff from the WHO collaborating centre for primary health care and nursing, Kazakhstan, met to discuss the importance of nurse leadership to facilitate nurses' participation in planning and implementing country health activities, and to explore the implications for nursing of the regional health for all targets. The participants reaffirmed recommendations made at previous meetings and expressed a commitment to implementing WHO policy on the role of the nurse. The meeting also provided a forum for reviewing the current work of the Nursing and Midwifery unit of the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The Third WHO Meeting of Government Chief Nurses from NIS is planned for 1995.

Keywords

HEALTH FOR ALL
NURSING SERVICES – organization and administration
NURSE ADMINISTRATORS
NURSING – trends
MIDWIFERY
NIS
NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

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INTRODUCTION

Five years ago the World Health Assembly passed a resolution on strengthening nursing and midwifery in support of strategies for health for all (WHA42.27), urging Member States to "encourage and support the appointment of nursing/midwifery personnel in senior leadership and management positions and to facilitate participation in planning and implementing the country's health activities". This focus on nursing leadership was also evident in the follow-up resolution passed at the Assembly in 1994 (WHA45.5).

This recognition of the vital importance of nursing leadership has been endorsed several times in recent years at WHO meetings. The issue is therefore a priority for the Nursing and Midwifery unit, WHO Regional Office for Europe, and is a major component of its Nursing in Action project. As this project has developed new needs have emerged, particularly in relation to the newly independent states (NIS) of the former Soviet Union. WHO has made great efforts to develop links with appropriate counterparts and activities are now under way in some countries. However, most nursing leaders in these Member States are unable to participate in international meetings held in English, while travel costs to western Europe are prohibitive.

In 1993, therefore, the First WHO Meeting of Government Chief Nurses from NIS was held in Kazakhstan in the Russian language, to encourage the involvement of these countries in the project and other international activities. It also acted as a springboard for WHO activities in the participating countries. The participants adopted the Nursing Declaration of Almaty, calling for far-reaching nursing and midwifery reforms in the NIS. They outlined specific measures to increase the effectiveness of these professions. These recommendations were circulated to all ministries of health and were widely publicized. This second meeting has been organized by WHO at the participants' request, with enthusiastic support from the Ministry of Health of Kyrgyzstan.

The participants were chosen according to certain criteria. They were the most senior nurse or midwife working in the health minis-

try of each Member State. Where such positions did not exist, nurses and midwives in other national leadership positions were selected. Where no such person could be identified, doctors or others in nursing leadership positions were invited. Annex 2 comprises a list of participants.

The meeting was opened by Jane Salvage, Regional Adviser for Nursing and Midwifery, WHO Regional Office for Europe, who introduced the Minister of Health, Dr Naken Kasiev. Dr Kasiev welcomed the participants and stated that the programme to reform the health services in Kyrgyzstan, including the reform of nursing, has been designed and implementation of changes has begun. Experience has shown that, despite some of the advantages of the former USSR health system, nursing was disadvantaged, and there was a lack of opportunity for nurses to use their skills. It is intended to redress the balance by letting nurses take a bigger role in the care of patients and the promotion of health in Kyrgyzstan.

The objectives of the meeting were agreed by the participants as follows.

- Review progress on the recommendations made at the First WHO Meeting of Government Chief Nurses from NIS.
- Review the current state of nursing and midwifery in NIS, including data collection in WHO country nursing and midwifery profiles and analysis of trends.
- Discuss common problems and possible solutions in nursing development in NIS.
- Develop chief nurses' knowledge and leadership skills.
- Strengthen the network of nursing leaders in NIS, to encourage exchange of information and ideas, develop future joint activities, and promote their participation in the international nursing community.
- Identify ways of strengthening links with WHO, to provide technical assistance and support and explore funding possibilities.

- Clarify the next steps in the LEarning Materials On Nursing (LEMON) project.
- Plan the Third WHO Meeting of Government Chief Nurses from NIS, to be held in Sweden in 1995.

The meeting was expected to have the following outcomes.

- Initiation or strengthening of the process of development of a national action plan for nursing in each Member State.
- Enhancement of leadership skills.
- Stronger links between nursing leaders, and between them and WHO.
- Greater insight into current nursing issues and their relationship to health development within the health for all framework.

DISCUSSION

Country reports

Participants had been asked to focus their reports on: the current strengths of nursing/midwifery in their countries; the most important developments needed to help nursing move forward; and the biggest difficulty they saw in introducing these developments. The participants divided into small groups to present and discuss their reports, focusing attention on nursing strengths and developments and obstacles preventing the development of nursing practice in their countries. Reported strengths and developments included the acknowledgement of nursing by appointing a chief nurse and, in a few cases, creating a department of nursing in the health ministry; the introduction of "multistep" nurse education; the creation of a national council of nurses; the establishment of a WHO collaborating centre for primary health care and nursing in Almaty, Kazakhstan; the success of projects run by nongovernmental organizations; and a feeling that public opinion of the status of nursing is

higher. Obstacles to progress included: lack of learning materials for nurses; inadequately prepared nurse leaders and teachers; the language barrier which impedes greater international communication; the low status of nursing in NIS, despite the improvement noted above; huge geographical distances, which are a barrier to holding meetings; and the high ratio of doctors to nurses.

Reports from the WHO Nursing and Midwifery unit

The Regional Adviser for Nursing and Midwifery described the work of the unit. The challenge for nursing to make a positive contribution to the goals of health for all, agreed at various meetings since 1988, led to a six-year plan for nursing, 1990-1995, the Nursing in Action project. The WHO publication *Nursing in action*¹, to be published in Russian shortly, contains a vision of and policies for nursing in Europe. The intercountry programme continues to emphasize leadership, strategic planning and LEMON, the preparation of LEarning Materials On Nursing. Country programmes, in addition to leadership and education, focus on management and clinical practice. The regular interaction between the Regional Office and key partners enables continuous evaluation of current work and future plans. This places nursing in a strong position to contribute meaningfully to public health and the goals of health for all. For the future there is a need to establish indicators of national nursing development and to undertake a comparative analysis of nursing and midwifery. The country nursing and midwifery profiles will provide baseline information. The LEMON project will in the short term answer the urgent need for basic learning materials oriented towards nursing. The long-term aim is for countries to become self-sufficient in writing and producing material.

The project coordinator for the country nursing and midwifery profiles described the purpose of the profiles and emphasized the importance of countries' contributions. The purposes of the profiles were to support national nurse leaders to develop strategies for

¹ *Nursing in action: strengthening nursing and midwifery to support health for all*. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1993 (WHO Publications, European Series, No. 48).

change, to give WHO information which would be used as a basis for programme development, to enable analysis of trends and to evaluate progress. They highlight the similarities and differences between countries. The format is simple and flexible, with broad headings. General health information is taken from existing WHO information and is easily updated on computer. The varied uses of the profiles include quick access to data, a practical way of checking and receiving data, and easy briefing for consultants, researchers and other agencies. Countries find them useful; some have translated them into their own language and WHO has translated some into Russian. They provide information not necessarily readily available in the country and give visibility to nursing.

There are significant constraints: it is not always possible to verify the accuracy of the information and it is very time consuming to gather information, compile the profiles, disseminate them, respond to requests and get the material translated. On completion of the profiles a comparative analysis will be undertaken. Participants were asked to check that what is written about their country is correct, to send any new information and/or corrections and to consider what comparators would be most useful. Wherever possible participants were encouraged to translate their profile into their language.

The coordinator of the LEMON project gave a progress report. In spring 1993 the Regional Office launched the project to provide a package of learning materials to all nurses and midwives in NIS as well as countries of central and eastern Europe (CCEE) in their own official languages. The international coordination of the project is done by the Regional Office. At country level the LEMON groups are in charge of all aspects of implementing the project (content and management), and in the process are building capacity for the future. Furthermore, the project network and infrastructure in countries provides a good basis for additional activities in the longer term.

The package is being compiled and tested and country groups are being established. In 1995 the package will be translated into the language of each participating country. Fund-raising is carried out by country LEMON groups and the Regional Office through the LEMONAID appeal. Kyrgyzstan has an active LEMON group; the

Russian Federation has a number of groups because of the size of the country, each group covers a region, including Tyumen and Omsk. Kazakhstan has been part of the project since August 1993 and is moving towards more active participation. The meeting was instrumental in preparing a more solid base for the project in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. LEMON is also an active project in Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Republic of Moldova; the Regional Office has received copies of articles about the project from journals all over Europe.

The LEMON group coordinator recapped the goals of the LEMON project: to make available learning materials on nursing to NIS/CCEE in the language of each country, which will enable nurses to make an informed contribution to the health of the nation and to become self-sufficient in producing and securing learning materials on nursing. The objectives of the first goal include adoption of LEMON in NIS/CCEE; the formation of national LEMON working groups; training experts to introduce LEMON in their country; translating LEMON into official languages; attracting donors to sponsor LEMON; and implementing the project. The coordinator emphasized the need to build into the project a means of evaluation and cautioned that the project may lead to other activities over a longer period of time and that groups will, because of different starting dates, progress at different rates. The coordinator then led a discussion on project management (management, planning and problem-solving), pointing out the differences between project work, routine work and ad hoc activity and highlighting the interaction between the significant aspects that control project work, namely time, money, quality, information and organization. The group divided into two to do some exercises on goal-setting and planning and identifying obstacles to progress and possible solutions to them in relation to LEMON. The participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the principles underpinning LEMON, in particular the need to adapt the material for each country and to evaluate progress. The LEMON glossary of terms will be distributed shortly, in advance of the completed package; this will give users an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the terms in the glossary in advance of using the LEMON material. Attention was also drawn

to the MANGO glossary of management terms, which is available in Russian.

WHO collaborating centre for primary health care and nursing, Almaty, Kazakhstan

The report from the collaborating centre listed its continuing activities, including workshops, seminars, dissemination and translation of documents, fund-raising and research. Participants were encouraged to use the collaborating centre as a resource for nursing practice.

The nurse's role and function

Participants divided into small groups to discuss the role and function of the nurse using the introduction and first chapter of *Nursing in action* to guide their discussions. Groups were encouraged to present the outcomes of their discussions in the format of their choice. Two groups chose to present their discussions dramatically, illustrating in role play the distinctive contribution nursing has to make to patient care. The third group reported orally with a drawing to show the nurse as an equal team member alongside doctor colleagues. All the presentations drew on the social and psychological aspects of patient care as well as physical nursing care. In addition, each group used a case study to identify the nursing intervention needed by the patient and make a nursing care plan. All groups took into consideration the patient's family circumstances and used the opportunity to provide relevant health education programmes. In particular, one group emphasized the need to carry out the doctor's orders as well as the nursing care plan but to independently choose the manner in which they were executed, using a nursing diagnosis and the nursing process.

CONCLUSIONS

The discussions that took place were wide-ranging; nursing had not been discussed in isolation, rather the need to work as members of a

health care team with members of allied disciplines was emphasized. However, the continuing domination of health care and nursing and midwifery by the medical profession was seen as a barrier to progress. The great strides made by nurses in NIS in the year since the last meeting, despite the difficulties, were acknowledged. The participants commended the efforts to establish the role of nurse leaders in planning and implementing country health activities, and by so doing ensure that nursing takes forward the goals of health for all. The evaluation forms showed that the time spent on extensive pre-planning of the meeting was time well invested.

The meeting had strengthened the process of developing national action plans for nursing in the countries represented at the meeting, enhanced leadership skills, strengthened links between participants and, in particular, strengthened links between the WHO collaborating centre in Almaty and participants. Further, greater insight into current nursing issues and their relationship to health development within the health for all framework was achieved. In the words of one of the participants, "the meeting has opened my eyes".

Participants were asked to state what action they intended to initiate on returning home from the meeting. Intentions included: to establish the post of government chief nurse; to establish a LEMON group; to share the information from this meeting with the minister of health, the nurses' council and chief nurses of *oblasts*; to stimulate colleagues; and to make use of the WHO collaborating centre for primary health care and nursing, Almaty.

The participants reaffirmed the recommendations made at previous meetings. They also expressed a commitment to implementing WHO policy on the role of the nurse, which describes the nurse's key functions as providing and managing nursing care; teaching patients, well people and health care professionals; acting as an effective, equal member of the health care team; and developing nursing practice through critical thinking and research.

Recommendations to countries

1. Inform ministries of health and nursing colleagues about the results of this meeting, wherever possible using the media

(journals, television, radio, etc.) to encourage debate about nursing.

2. Work on the development of a national action plan for nursing as part of national health policy.
3. Provide learning materials on nursing in local languages through implementation of the WHO LEMON project by country LEMON groups, and maintain regular contact with the WHO project coordinator.
4. Review, update and translate into local languages the WHO country nursing and midwifery profiles.
5. Strengthen the network of NIS nursing leaders, using the WHO collaborating centre for primary health care and nursing, Kazakhstan, wherever appropriate.
6. Maintain regular contact with the WHO Regional Office for Europe and keep it informed about successes and needs.
7. Review the current terminology used to describe middle-level health workers and, where appropriate, devise suitable new terminology in keeping with WHO policies.

Recommendations to WHO

8. Publicize the results of this meeting as widely as possible, using the media whenever appropriate, including communication with health ministries.
9. Assist countries to provide learning materials on nursing through implementation of the LEMON project.
10. Continue collaboration between the Nursing and Midwifery unit, Regional Office for Europe, and other relevant WHO

programmes at other regional offices and headquarters, and in each country.

11. Continue dissemination of WHO materials in Russian, especially the translation of the book on nursing in action.
12. Assist NIS nursing leaders to make links with nursing leaders from other countries in the Region and worldwide.
13. Work with nursing leaders in Sweden to organize the Third WHO Meeting of Government Chief Nurses from NIS in Stockholm in 1995.

*Annex I***BACKGROUND MATERIAL²**

Country reports (briefing for participants) ICP/HRH 301(4) BD/12.

European Conference on Nursing: report on a WHO meeting. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1988.

Selected extracts from the Russian translation of *Nursing in action: strengthening nursing and midwifery to support health for all*. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1993 (WHO Publications, European Series, No. 48). (Russian translation in press.)

First WHO Meeting of Government Chief Nurses from the Newly Independent States: report of a WHO meeting. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1994.

Nursing in the Newly Independent States – Second Declaration of Alma-Ata, 1993 and corresponding WHO press release.

Salvage, J. *National action plans for nursing: from vision to implementation*. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1993.

Glossary of management terms for Russian-speaking nurse leaders (MANGO glossary). Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1994.

Country nursing and midwifery profiles:

- (a) copy of previous letter to Ministries of Health (NUR 0794A, 8 January 1993)
- (b) minimum data list
- (c) sample profile of Kyrgyzstan.

Nursing in Action – project outline.

² Copies can be requested from the Nursing and Midwifery unit at the WHO Regional Office for Europe, 8 Scherfigsvej, 2100 Copenhagen Ø. All the background material is available in Russian.

LEarning Materials On Nursing (the LEMON Project). Brochure. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1993.

Country LEMON groups, information leaflet No. 1.

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