
The Council of International Neonatal Nurses’ Position Statement on Ethical Migration and Recruitment of Neonatal Nurses

COINN supports the International Council of Nurses (ICN) (2007) position on ethical nurse recruitment¹ and believes that quality neonatal care cannot be given without an adequate supply of well qualified and educated nurses.

COINN advocates for ethical recruitment for employment which provides adequate training, orientation and support or supervision.

COINN reaffirms ICN and the WHO global alliance call for a regulated recruitment process based on ethical principles that guides informed decision making and reinforces sound employment policies on the parts of governments, employers and nurses, thus supporting fair and cost-effective recruitment and retention practices¹.

COINN supports an individual’s right to migrate to another country for better quality of life, working conditions, or other personal reasons.

Background

Career mobility is important both to nurses in furthering their careers and to society to allow nursing to adapt and respond to changing health needs.

Neonatal nursing is a growing specialty that is experiencing nursing shortages and thus there is a need for recruitment. Developed countries have increased their acquisition of nurses from developing countries, adding to the global shortage². Healthcare institutions engage in different types of recruitment strategies which include employing agents to recruit nurses on their behalf, acquiring necessary visas and arranging transportation to the country of employment. Some agents are legitimate, while others barter or trade nurses for substantial sums of money. Given the growing global nursing shortage as documented by the International Council of Nurses¹, it is envisaged that bartering or trading nurses for profit will increase.

Increasingly there have been calls for an ethical framework for nurse recruitment. A global alliance for the healthcare workforce³ has the purpose of strengthening advocacy and supporting partnerships at global and country levels for building an effective healthcare workforce during the next decade. The World Health Assembly has requested the WHO Director General to develop a global strategy on human resources for health for consideration at the assembly in 2016. With a commitment to a forward looking health workforce strategy which commits Governments to creating the conditions for strengthening health workforce and health systems and reaffirming the role of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Professionals⁴.

Ideally countries should be able to manage their workforce effectively and not be reliant on international recruitment; however the reality is that nurse migration is being undertaken by many countries to address their nursing shortage. This migration can lead to “brain drain” from one country and the need to transition safely into a new work environment in the country to which the nurse is migrating.

- There should be a limit on the number of nurses migrating, countries from which migration is acceptable and duration of time during which this migration is permitted so that this migration is not at the behest of a shortfall.¹
- Retention strategies should be employed so that nurses have incentives to stay in their own countries rather than migrate.¹

- Many nurses report they would prefer to remain in their home country however the quality of work life needs to be improved before migration will significantly decrease. Strategies to improve work-life could include but are not limited to: better working conditions, decreased number of hours, better patient to nurse ratios, and better compensation-wages and benefits.¹

Key principles:

COINN supports and advocates for the following key principles for ethical nurse recruitment^{1,4}:

1. The promotion of effective human resource planning, management and development, leading to national self-sustainability.
2. Credible nursing regulation with active involvement by the employing institution or another governing body to ensure that standards of practice are upheld when no national regulatory bodies are in place.
3. For nurses to have access to full employment and equal pay for work of equal value
4. Good faith contracting, access to grievance procedures and a safe working environment. Nurses have the right to work in a safe working environment and one that adheres to the ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses or if available the recruiting country's national nursing code of ethics in addition to the United Nations' (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
5. Consideration of cultural differences between the nurse and their new work colleagues, and the need for cultural sensitivity in the new work environment must be addressed.
6. Language acquisition must be supported. This acquisition is to include written, verbal, and comprehension.
7. Effective orientation/mentoring/supervision. If specialized knowledge is required as would be the case within neonatal or maternal child nursing. Adequate support for specialized evidence based care in neonatology or maternal child should be made available. There should be a commitment from both nurse and recruiter to strengthen education and training by continued acquisition of knowledge and demonstration of competency in neonatal or maternal child care. Monitoring for quality of care should be provided and performance appraisal of the individual nurse must be ongoing in the areas of newborn, maternal, and family care.

Summary statement:

The above principles are the foundation for ethical recruitment. The recruitment and retention of nurses has become an urgent priority. Nurses need to be well informed. National Nurses Associations have a responsibility to provide information and lobby for the elimination of unethical recruitment practices and active involvement by employing institutions or other governing bodies in the development of national workforce plans.

COINN is the international organization that represents the global community of neonatal nurses and their organizational partners. COINN advances neonatal nursing care and the profession of neonatal nursing by speaking with one strong voice. Working together we are able to contribute to the formulation of health policy, promote quality neonatal care and advance neonatal nursing knowledge while fostering high practice standards for neonatal nursing as a profession.

This Position Statement represents the views of the Council of International Neonatal Nurses. This Statement was approved by the Board of COINN on 16 July 2015. This statement was coordinated by Ms Deborah O'Donoghue.

References:

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3. World Health Organization, 67th World Health Assembly 2014.
http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/media/news/2014/recife_political_declaration
4. World Health Organization Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel.
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