



Israel: Contribution of nursing leadership to the health workforce governance system in general and during the Covid-19 pandemic in particular

The World Health Assembly resolution 74.15 calls on Member States *to establish and strengthen national and subnational senior leadership roles for nurses and midwives with authority and responsibility for management of nursing and midwifery workforces and input into health decision-making, including considering appointing Government Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers (GCNMOs)*. The existence of GCNMOs and senior leadership programmes are associated with better regulation of education and work¹.

Israel is an example of a country that has a Government Chief Nursing Officer (GCNO), a senior official serving as Deputy to the Ministry of Health General Manager and is a key contributor to determining policies and leading the national work plan during routine and emergency periods. Currently, the Nursing Division oversees eleven departments, including one for Managing the Health Workforce in emergencies. During the pandemic, the GCNO led the process of rapidly mobilizing, repurposing, and upskilling the country's health workforce to meet the requirements of the national COVID-19 response.

There were three main challenges in the management of the national health workforce during the pandemic: monitoring the incidence of the disease, the need to combat staff shortages, and the absence of a robust routine data collection system on health workforce providing real-time information to inform policy-making.

Policy responses led by the GCNO at the Nursing Division included providing thousands of new permanent positions; increases in intensive care unit and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) training; and using a data-driven decision-making process model to assess effective utilization of resources, including the creation in a set time frame of additional qualified workforce.

This data driven process included increased efforts in gathering, synthesizing, and analyzing data. It enabled the Nursing Division to provide daily reports on health workforce profile, that helped the identification of staff shortages in real time, as well as targeting recruitment, allocation, and training where it was most needed.

The work that the Nursing Division was able to roll out at national scale, illustrates the important linkage between a national government Chief Nursing Officer placed in a position to steward, resource, and monitor education and work at a national scale to rapidly adjust to the immediate demand, in this case a pandemic. The Nursing Division provided the intensive care training of 2,000

¹ WHO. State of the world's nursing 2020: investing in education, jobs and leadership. [Internet]. 2020. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/nursing-report-2020>

nurses, 4,000 newly graduated nurses, and the recruitment of 7,418 nursing students for work, during the period July 2020 until 2021.

In addition, 800 paramedics joined the health workforce together with 700 allied health professionals and other health workers, including social workers, physiotherapists, nutrition, technological assistants, and laboratory workers. New permanent positions for nurses (2550) and medical doctors (700) were also established.

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