



Report reveals extent of damage caused to healthcare professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic

Geneva, Switzerland, 3 April 2023 – A comprehensive report from the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) has revealed the extent of the physical and psychological damage done to healthcare professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic because the health systems they worked in failed to protect them.

It pulls together evidence of the impact of the pandemic from the WHPA's five members, FDI World Dental Federation, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), the International Council of Nurses (ICN), World Physiotherapy and the World Medical Association (WMA), which in total represent 41 million healthcare professionals.

The report, [What the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed: the findings of five global health workforce professions](#), says healthcare workers feared for their personal safety during the pandemic because of a lack of protective equipment, and the absence of any systematic support and security left many feeling undervalued.

WHPA Chair Jonathon Kruger said, "By pooling the data from surveys of their memberships conducted during the pandemic, the WHPA organizations have been able to put together a unique picture of what the pandemic looked like for health professionals on the ground. By identifying the challenges we have in common across the professions, we can work together to resolve them.

"The WHPA is also pleased to see the publication of this report as one of the first concrete outcomes of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between its members and the WHO in November 2022, and looks forward to continuing the collaboration."

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton, who is a co-author of the report, thanked fellow authors Hoi Shan Fokeladeh and Erin Downey, and said the report should be used by governments to influence their plans for the next global health emergency, and ensure that healthcare staff do not have to carry such a heavy and unfair burden in the future.

"Around the world, prior underinvestment in health systems meant that they failed the health professionals and multidisciplinary teams that are the life blood, the very essence of our health care services.

"We know what needs to be done: the challenge is making it happen. A vital first step would be to have more health professionals in the most senior leadership positions to counter the current disconnect between decision makers and health care professionals on the front line.

"We need governments to honour the contribution of nurses and others during the pandemic, elevate them to positions where they can more directly influence health care policies, and make



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sure that they never again have to face a deadly pandemic without the care, support and protection that they deserve.”

The report says vaccination information and training needs to be revised to address vaccination hesitancy and rejection. It also highlights the lack of mental health and psychosocial support experienced by professional staff, and the profound disruption that occurred to their education, with the closure of education centres, and postponement or cancellation of clinical placements.

It says concerted efforts are needed to protect healthcare workers from the chronic violence that exists in healthcare settings, and that they should have a greater say in high-level planning, strategy and decision making about the policies that they are responsible for carrying out.

The report concludes that there needs to be a greater involvement of healthcare professionals in efforts to rebuild healthcare systems after the pandemic as part of a whole society response that will contribute to global preparedness and health security.

A panel of all WHPA members will be speaking at the WHO Global Forum on Human Resources for Health on Monday 3 April 2023.

Note for Editors

The World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) brings together the global organizations representing the world’s dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists and physicians and speaks for more than 41 million health care professionals in more than 130 countries. The WHPA works to improve global health and the quality of patient care and facilitates collaboration among the health professions and major stakeholders.

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