Year of the Nurse: Calling on Experts in Continuing Education

The World Health Organization has designated 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and Midwife. This distinction reflects the role of the nurse in promoting health and recognizes the projected need for nine million more nurses and midwives to provide global health coverage over the next decade. Yes, we do need many more nurses and midwives, and after initial credentialing, these new professionals will need continuing education to achieve and maintain competency throughout their careers. That sounds to me like a call for continuing education professionals!

In addition to the need for more nurses and nurse midwives across the globe, nursing roles are advancing and expanding. The Future of Nursing 2020-2030 campaign has publicized current challenges, such as providing accessible and equitable care, achieving health workforce diversity, managing change in health systems, and expanding primary and community care. Nurses already work on these issues, but there is much more to be done. A larger, more diverse nursing workforce will need to learn new ways of promoting health and providing care outside of acute care settings. Again, that sounds to me like a call for continuing education professionals.

How can continuing education professionals answer the call? Here are some ideas to get you started.

- Assess local and global needs for educational support and programs.
- Plan and provide continuing education programs promoting collaborative interdisciplinary practice models.
- Integrate information about the social determinants of health and health promotion of individuals, groups, and communities into conference planning.
- Advocate for global access to health promotion and illness care.
- Provide resources to support nurses in leading change and managing the pace of change in health settings.
- Design programs that help nurses experienced in acute care to transition effectively to providing primary care.
- Conduct or support research into practices for eliminating health disparities and providing equitable care.
- Teach in academic and continuing education programs that prepare nurses to take on new roles and meet changing health needs.
- Mentor nurses moving into innovative roles and new settings.

What can you do, in your workplace, in your community, and through your global connections, to help advance the role of the nurse in promoting health over the next decade?