

Nurses- A leading Force to achieve Sustainable Development Goals

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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were approved by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a collective global call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy harmony and prosperity by 2030.

The 17 SDGs are interrelated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect results in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Through the pledge to Leave No One Behind, countries have committed to fast-track progress for those furthest behind first. That is why the SDGs are designed to bring the world to several life-changing ‘zeros’, including zero poverty, hunger, AIDS and discrimination against women and girls.

Everyone is needed to reach these ambitious targets. The creativity, knowhow, technology and financial resources from all of society is necessary to achieve the SDGs in every context.

This article presents a context and rationale for the involvement of nurses and the discipline of nursing in supporting progress toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nurses have a moral and ethical obligation to ensure that these goals are met by 2030. The article proposes that engaging, supporting, and influencing the achievement of the ambitious SDGs could happen if nurses, individually and collectively, value and connect their own goals and ongoing work with SDGs, focus their efforts on specific goals and advocate for needed change, monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving them, and propagate findings globally. Work in progress or completed by nurses, faculty, students, clinicians, or researchers, as well as work done related to the discipline of nursing mission and strategic

goals that reflect the SDGs, should be disseminated widely through journals, books, and presentations.

Nursing: A Moral Commitment

Nurses have a moral and ethical obligation to ensure that the SDGs are met by 2030. Besides the obvious reason, which is that nurses are by far the largest global health care workforce (20.7 million globally), there are other equally compelling rationales why nurses must undertake, if not leadership, then noticeable roles in ensuring improvement toward achieving many of the SDG targets across the spectrum.

Nursing is established on a social contract with society. That contract is to keep people healthy, to boost their well-being, and to protect them from harm due to disease, environmental deprivation, or violence. The well-accepted mission of the nursing profession is to enhance peoples' abilities to care for themselves, to minimize suffering, to contribute to populations' quality of life, to ensure effective evolutions back to health and well-being, to enable populations' abilities to function and be productive up to their full extent, and to provide concerned care wherever it is needed regardless of race, culture, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, or educational levels. Over many generations, and in many corners of the globe, nurses have provided care to the most vulnerable and needy, as well as to the least vulnerable and wealthy. Nurses practice from a framework driven by principles of human rights for fairness, justice, inclusiveness, and access to fundamental resources that safeguard them from harm, the very principles that fortify and inform the SDGs. Nurses are concerned with Rugerstatement "health capability of individuals," which is people's ability to be healthy and function at their full capacities, to be able to use their own self-agency, and to lead lives they consider of value. This congruency between nursing ethics, principles, values, and mission, and those upon which the SDGs are established, provide one more solidstimulus for nurses and the discipline of nursing to engage in ensuring systematic progress toward achieving these goals.

The discipline of nursing, as far back as Florence Nightingale in 1854, claims environment and its health as the keystones for ensuring and enhancing health care of populations and for bringing sick, invalid, or injured people back to wellness. Nightingale and her disciples strongly advocated for ensuring their immediate environment (e.g., air and lights) was attended to and maintained. Others followed suit and expanded the meaning of

“environment” to be even more inclusive of energy, cultures, and family, social, economic, and political environments. Epistemologically, the discipline of nursing is based on the logical principles of holism and the connection of individuals with families, communities, and societies. The domain of nursing includes the inseparability of relationships between environment and individuals and the importance of community-based assessment for understanding human behavior and responses to health these interactions and connections are deemed essential conditions for the health and well-being of populations.

More recently, members of the nursing discipline went even further and investigated the effects of natural and man-made disasters, lead poisoning, pollution, and global warming, and their effects on lifestyle changes, and ultimately, their effects on cognition, inhalation, sleep, energy levels, and safety. Once again, this provides rationale and credence to how vital it is to enhance and sustain an environment’s health, which in turn profoundly influences populations’ health and well-being.

The SDGs acknowledge these diverse aspects and components of environments and their impact on health and well-being while providing ambitious and transformative guidelines concerning their equitable development and sustainability. The 2030 Agenda calls for clean water and sanitation, clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, and actions for maintaining balanced climate ecosystems. This connection between the health and well-being of populations envisioned and promoted by the SDGs is totally and unequivocally congruent with nursing’s mission and goals, and provides a platform for nursing’s engagement in sustainable, healthy environments as conditions for achieving health and well-being of populations. Nursing’s powerful voice, emanating from knowledge and research-based evidence and from expert practice, is needed to ensure progress for all the SDGs.

Maximizing Nursing’s Contributions and Influence

engaging, supporting, and influencing the achievement of these ambitious SDGs could happen if nurses, individually and collectively, value and connect their own goals and ongoing work with the SDGs, focus their efforts on specific goals and advocate for needed change, monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving them, and disseminate findings globally. It is provided to stimulate thoughts and challenge actions about ways by which the discipline of nursing may effectively engage and promote the achievement of

the SDGs, taking the concepts contained in this text and translating them into deliberate leadership actions.

Value and Connect

It is essential that the nursing profession and nursing organizations recognize the significance of their role in achieving the SDGs. Therefore, students, faculty, clinicians, researchers, and administrators should recognize, study, and understand each of the 17 goals and 169 targets. While all goals should be reviewed in their totality, it may be prudent to identify different goals that are more specific for different organizations' focus and/or practice fields. For example, a course in global health may utilize all SDGs as a framework, while a course in a school of nursing about infant and children's health care may focus on hunger (SDG 2), a course in women's health may focus on equality (SDGs 5 and 10) and economic growth (SDG 8), and a course in community health may focus on making cities more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (SDG 11), and on the impact of climate change and how to affect changes to decrease global warming (SDG 13).

Theoretical and clinical assignments and classroom discussions may be geared toward how each of the SDGs may be achieved for individual patients, for families, for populations, or for communities. Similarly, nursing organizations, coalitions, or communities may also utilize similar approaches by integrating their strategic goals with the SDGs and critically addressing ways by which achieving organizational goals coincides with, or promotes progress in, SDG attainment. Another example may be that an organization, such as the American Academy of Nursing, may review edge runner nominees and their designation as edge runners by revising the criteria to include some of the goals and the targets outlined by the SDGs. The focus of edge runners then becomes the extent they contribute to progress in one or more of the Global Goals.

Focus and Advocate

To make a substantive difference, organizations may choose to select one or two of the SDGs and systematically develop a plan to demonstrate how members may proceed to meet some (or all) of the relevant targets. An example may be members of a hospital selecting SDG 13, "Taking urgent action to combat climate change." One of the targets is 13.3, "Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change

mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning” By selecting this target, members of the organization could develop strategies to implement its relevant goals. Upon meeting target 13.3, the strategies could be used in other institutions developing the human capacity for planning, management, implementation, and evaluation of these strategies. Promoting these mechanisms, one institution at a time, the target of 13.3—enhancing institutions’ human capacity—could be raised at the policy level, mandating human resources for all aspects of climate and environmental changes, first institutionally and organizationally, then citywide, state-wide, nationally, and so on.

In addition to this selectivity of goals, it is vital that nurses and the nursing profession continue to honor commitment and resources to increasing access to health care, decreasing disparities, and attending to the needs of the most vulnerable and needy populations.

Monitor and Evaluate

The SDGs provide ample opportunities for both established and novice nurse investigators to develop mechanisms to monitor progress toward their achievement, as well as the metrics to measure the attainment of targets. By assuming leadership in the development of methodologies and metrics, nurses can evaluate progress in achieving the SDGs while demonstrating that nursing research and investigation are relevant to each of them. By focusing and making the necessary connective statements to the SDGs, a reservoir for findings is provided beyond singular research projects. By assuming ownership of some of the SDGs and integrating findings, these reviews may be used to determine progress toward SDG achievement. Nursing research findings, which inform health care policies in the United States, have not been as prominent in informing global health care policies. Developing measures and methodologies and programs of research for monitoring progress now and through to the completion of the year 2030 for achieving the SDGs provides a platform for nurse scientists to make a global impact on global health policies. It is strongly suggested that the SDGs could be a framework that informs the development of research themes and goals by members of institutions where nursing knowledge development is fostered. Among these are the universities that have PhD and postdoctoral programs in nursing, as well as organizations that support nursing science and scientists.

Disseminate Findings Globally

Work in progress or completed by nurses, faculty, students, clinicians, or researchers, as well as work done related to the discipline of nursing mission and strategic goals that reflect the SDGs, should be disseminated widely through journals, books, and presentations. Several goals should drive the dissemination. One obvious goal is the sharing of knowledge that is expected in an established discipline. Another goal is to ensure that nursing knowledge is readily accessible through searches for those individuals who will be charged to evaluate progress in achieving the SDGs. Recognition of nursing knowledge and of clinicians' and researchers' roles in achieving the SDGs validates the discipline of nursing's mission and contributions. Often such acknowledgment and validation are lacking, particularly because nursing contributions are not included in the analyses and reports that integrate final indicators of the status of progress related to global initiatives.

In addition to developing programs of research that address questions and measures related to the SDGs, nursing organizations may periodically provide integrative analysis and interpretation of findings that address progress on SDG target achievement. This integrative analysis can become a precursor to final reviews, which will be conducted to determine whether and in what ways goals were attained by 2030. Different organizations may select different goals for such analysis and for producing reviews that integrate findings for a designated period.

Have Forecasting view

Nurses, as global educators, researchers, and clinicians, are well positioned to use their strong moral commitment to the well-being of populations and their voice to advocate for, and participate in, achieving all of the SDGs. They could be the means, individually and collectively, to take full advantage of the multiple opportunities afforded to them through practice, community-based programs, and through mentoring and educating novices to influence progress toward meeting the SDGs. Nurses have an open window of opportunity to influence the outcomes of the SDGs because they have developed many tools to help governments achieve these goals. To be transformative agents, nurses must be fully aware of and value the SDG targets, and connect them to their own work, daily practices, and scientific investigations. But, they also must systematically and deliberately plan their work, actions, practice, and research toward supporting and/or advocating for the SDGs. By disseminating

their findings, they can ensure that nurses' strategies and voices make a global difference in the SDGs and that they are included in the final analysis of progress toward SDG attainment.

Conclusion:

The profession at large must support and create more expanded roles for nurses in global health through direct participation in the UN Sustainable Development Agenda. While health may explicitly appear only in SDG 3, "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages," it is easy to see health as a driver, an intervening variable, and/or a component in all of the other goals. It is vital to consider the ways by which nurses, and the discipline of nursing, may support and ensure that these progressive and futuristic Global Goals are achieved.

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