



**SIDIEF**

SECRETARIAT INTERNATIONAL DES INFIRMIERES  
ET INFIRMIERS DE L'ESPACE FRANCOPHONE

## **DECLARATION IN FAVOUR OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR NURSES IN THE FRENCH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES**

**Adopted**

**at the SIDIEF General Assembly on May 22, 2012**

*A health system that invests in nursing expertise is making an informed choice that acts as a catalyst for a genuine transformation of health care in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (SIDIEF, 2011)*

**In its Geneva Declaration, the General Assembly supported and ratified SIDIEF's position in favour of university training for nurses in the French-speaking countries, as recommended in its 2011 position statement, and asked that efforts continue to reach this goal in the different countries of the Francophonie by 2020.**

**Geneva, May 22, 2012**

## **PREAMBLE**

The SIDIEF General Assembly held in Marrakech, Morocco, on June 9, 2009, recommended that SIDIEF address the inequities and disparities in access to university education for nurses in the French-speaking countries and adopt an official position encouraging the countries involved to support such access.

Concerned by the widening gap between their education and public health needs, nurses in the French-speaking countries are stressing the urgent need to establish and maintain a dialogue, on an equal footing, with their colleagues in other countries. The specific challenges facing African nurses, where access to university education in nursing is almost impossible, were cited.

In these countries, the lack of access to advanced scientific knowledge undermines efforts by health professionals and delays progress toward achieving Millennium Development Goals.

While Anglo-Saxon, Spanish-speaking and Scandinavian countries are renowned worldwide for their significant advances in nursing education and are making a university degree a prerequisite for entering the profession, many French-speaking countries are clearly falling behind in this respect.

In view of the obvious lag on the part of French-speaking countries in raising nursing education to the university level, necessary to reposition the role of nurses and enhance their professional mobility in light of reforms to national healthcare systems, the SIDIEF Board of Directors has made it a high priority to study the issue of nursing training as part of a complete university stream including all levels, as recommended by the General Assembly in Marrakech in 2009. SIDIEF published a position statement in 2011 explaining its position.

## **THE SIDIEF POSITION STATEMENT: *UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR NURSES: A RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES FACING HEALTH SYSTEMS***

### ● **MAIN FINDINGS**

There is widespread agreement on the healthcare challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the management of chronic disease, mental disorders, communicable diseases, maternal and child mortality, health disparities – all of them underscore the urgency of making health care, mainly primary care, accessible as an essential response to evolving public health needs. All healthcare systems must be transformed, and those that instigate profound changes will reap the greatest benefits.

Health care of the future will be nothing like that of the past, if we consider the extensive demographic, epidemiological, scientific and technological changes already underway. Given the

scarcity of resources and shortages of skilled professionals, health care calls for approaches based on proper practices and scientific evidence backed up by research. It requires a rethinking of professional roles, a new division of responsibilities, in particular between nurses and physicians, to achieve the effectiveness and efficiency sought by healthcare systems worldwide. It is also a matter of social justice and equity for a predominantly female professional group that is still too often denied access to higher education.

Investing in nursing expertise is an enlightened choice, promising solutions in the medium and long terms. It offers recognized and proven added value, especially in terms of patient safety, quality of care, patient and staff satisfaction, and cost control. This expertise is a guarantee of interprofessional collaboration, innovation and fair and effective governance.

It seems logical to suggest that the commitment of a better-educated nursing workforce represents a productive investment, rather than an expenditure. Just think of the cost savings in terms of accidents, adverse events, complications and re-hospitalization and the benefits for patients, their families and society as a whole. Proper nursing skills clearly contribute to strengthening health systems.

Many large international organizations have fully understood this. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are calling upon countries to invest in nursing education and expand nurses' spectrum of responsibilities. The value of advanced nursing roles has been demonstrated, and the International Council of Nurses (ICN) is asking countries to support nursing education to ensure access to effective, safe and efficient care and to reduce the costs of poor quality care.

SIDIIEF joins these large international organizations in calling for policies that promote access to university training and the development of an academic discipline based on all three university levels.

Close to one hundred organizations from throughout the French-speaking countries, along with the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the West African Health Organization (WAHO), are lending their wholehearted support to the conclusions and recommendations of the SIDIIEF position statement on university education for nurses.

## ● **THE SIDIIEF POSITION STATEMENT**

Encouraged by this support, SIDIIEF considers it vital to invest in the university education of nurses and in nursing research in order to meet the challenges of accessibility, effectiveness, efficiency and innovation in healthcare systems. Nurses are most often the gatekeepers of the healthcare system, and represent the largest professional group in direct contact with the healthcare needs of individuals, families and communities. SIDIIEF is convinced that over one million nurses, from some thirty French-speaking countries, represent an unstoppable force and remarkable potential at the service of public health.

Therefore, SIDIIEF officially urges the governments of the countries in the French-speaking countries to:

- ➔ **introduce a university education system that includes 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> levels of nursing science;**
- ➔ **make a bachelor's degree in nursing science the entry requirement for the nursing profession;**
- ➔ **invite the International Organization of La Francophonie (IOF) to support, through institutional, national, intra-and interregional cooperation mechanisms, university education in nursing and to make this a priority in African countries.**

## **SUPPORT FOR THE SIDIIEF POSITION**

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