

KEYNOTE SPEECH
Associate Professor Dr.Tassana Boontong
Chairperson, World Academy of Nursing Science (WANS)

on “Challenges in the Future of Global Health Issues”



Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

Health is a cornerstone of the country's socio-economic development, peace and security. The WHO Constitution states that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition. The right to health for all people means that everyone should have access to the health services they need, when and where they need them, without, suffering financing hardship.

Nurse-midwife is the key health workforce contributing to the achievement of Universal Health Coverage and Sustainable Development Goal 3 which is aimed for healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages. However, the nurse-midwife's performance could be ineffective due to the epidemiological changes, ineffective health system, advanced technology, nursing profession issues, inadequate investment from the State, global health issues and social determinants.

Global health deals with health issues and determinants that affect multiple countries crossing borders. Global health is an area for study and practice that prioritizes improving health and achieving equity in health for all people worldwide. Experts from the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation identified the main global health issues to watch in 2023, that is, long COVID; mental health; the impact of climate change; non-communicable diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, and dementia; lower respiratory infections; poverty's role in health; health systems strengthening; road injuries and population aging (<https://www.healthdata.org>).

These health issues continue to prevail today and in the future as well as other health issues including reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health; communicable diseases, universal health coverage, and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable medicines and vaccines.

The dynamic change in the health landscape, the advancement of medical technology, digital technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and telemedicine, the contaminated environment and hazardous to health and economic crisis worldwide add more burden on global health. The challenges or threats in the future of global health issues that we could face including

- More complex, severe, and long-term health problems affecting a person, family, and society as a whole.
- More interaction of humans, animals, and the environment leading to poor health;
- Emerging and re-emerging of health problems calling for new learning, resilience, and adaptation of health personnel and new research and innovation,
- Increasing morbidity, mortality and decreasing productivity and economic growth of the country,

- Uncontrolled social determinants of health such as inequity in access to safe housing, healthy food, health service, transportation, technology; political turmoil; economic crisis. These lead to disparity in health in particular among the poor, the vulnerable and fragile people,
- Lead agencies in global health facing limited resources particular experts and funds,
- Solutions being complex and requiring collaboration and partnership within and across nations, and
- Ineffective health system due to a shortage of a competent workforce, inadequate health financing, insufficient medicines and vaccines, ineffective technology, and inadequate health information, research, and innovation.

Nursing and midwifery profession must be strengthened to be able to effectively respond to those challenges on future global health issues, 6 key strategies are suggested.

1. Strengthen the leadership capacity of nurses and midwives to be able to lead the change and be resilience; and sit at the policy table to dialogue on national health policy and plan and issues and solutions related to nursing and midwifery profession.
2. Advocate and urge the Government and funding agencies/donors to increase investment in nursing education, jobs and workplaces, leadership, and services to enhance nurses' contributions to the achievement of the global agenda and be economic power of care. This is aligned with the Resolution adopted in the 74th World Health Assembly on "Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery: Investment in education, jobs, leadership, and service delivery" which the Member States have endorsed and committed.
3. Improve the quality of nursing care with patient-center focused, equity, and digital literacy. Emphasis more on disease prevention and health promotion. Expanding independent role in the primary care level, including home and community-based care, by working in collaboration with family, community, local health authorities, and sectors beyond the health sector. This also requires nurse-midwife's attitude toward lifelong learning or continuous professional development to keep up with the new knowledge and technology for effective services.

Thailand Nursing and Midwifery Council collaborated with National Health Security Office in registration of qualified nurse clinic to be a “Caring Community Nurse Clinic” under the national health insurance scheme. This initiative leads to the accessibility of people to health care service near home with 24 hours service, hospitals are less crowded, patients do not need to pay the service from their own pockets but the clinic will charge the service as agreed to the National Health Insurance office directly. More important, nurses could be a gatekeeper for health at the primary care level, perform independent role within the scope of practice identified in the regulation and become entrepreneur. In addition the educational institutes have established the clinic in their own institutions or near by for faculty members and students to practice.

4. Reform nursing education and training. Equip nursing students with 21st-century skills, including critical thinking and analysis, creativity or imagination, communication skills, problem-solving, information technology skills and digital knowledge, collaboration, and the ability to work in the multicultural-country culture and environment. The hybrid teaching-learning with the use of simulation, information technology, AI as well as flexible models of learning, credit banks are to be developed so the students could learn when and where they desire. With the complex of global health problems, there is a need for more number of nurses with specialization. Training on nursing specialty in a short course or at the Master’s level are to be increased. Lastly, quality assurance system of the educational institution must be in place.
5. Strengthen research and innovation in nursing. Promote and support interdisciplinary research, innovation, and research across countries to create new knowledge and interventions from multi-perspective. Practice-based evidence, and policy-based evidence must be emphasized.

Thailand Nursing and Midwifery Council under the support of Thailand Health Promotion Foundation conducted on research study on long term care system for elderly. Like many countries, Thailand is moving toward ageing society. In the community there are elderly with good health, active elderly with chronic illness and dependent aging with poor health or palliative stage. The findings lead to knowledge development written in 4 books, guidelines for education and practice, policy formulation and professional development in the following areas:

- 1) Management of the long term care system for elderly,
- 2) Model of long term care for elderly: Lesson learned from successful elderly care models from 5 regions of Thailand

- 3) Role of nurses in management of health care system : A case study of long term care for elderly,
- 4) Model of community health system development by community nurses and competencies development for community nurses.

The finding clearly indicated that community nurse is the most suitable person to manage long term care system for elderly at the primary care level and promote community health.

6. The final strategy in tackling global health issues: Networking and partnerships. In order to tackling complex global health issues, networking among national and international nursing organizations, services, education, and other health disciplines and disciplines beyond health for knowledge and skills sharing from different perspectives is required. Partnerships with other technical agencies including funding agency is one of the key target to achieve SDGs as health influences and is influenced by many other factors/components.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The 8th WANS-5th INNA International Conference provides a good opportunity to meet new colleagues, have dialogues, and find common interest or issues to bring excellence in tackling global health problems. Recent COVID-19 pandemic is an excellent example of how important countries should collaborate and work closely with each other for information, vaccines, and other resource sharing. We need to use digital technology to bridge and promote cooperation and partnerships on the basis of mutual trust and equity within and beyond health sector as the theme of the World Health Assembly 2024 on Health for All and All for Health.

In most countries, nurses are the largest manpower in health care system. We must unite and voice out what we could do and do what we are capable of. Let us lead and make a difference in health care system and meet the challenges of future global health issues with knowledge and wisdom.

Thank you for your kind attention.