



**International  
Council of Nurses**

# **THE ICN CODE OF ETHICS FOR NURSES**

REVISED 2021

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*An international code of ethics for nurses was first adopted by the International Council of Nurses (ICN) in 1953. It has been revised and reaffirmed at various times since, most recently with this review and revision completed in 2021.*

## PURPOSE OF THE CODE

The *ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses* is a statement of the ethical values, responsibilities and professional accountabilities of nurses and nursing students<sup>1</sup> that defines and guides ethical nursing practice within the different roles nurses assume. It is not a code of conduct but can serve as a framework for ethical nursing practice and decision-making to meet professional standards set by regulatory bodies.

The *ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses* provides ethical guidance in relation to nurses' roles, duties, responsibilities, behaviours, professional judgement and relationships with patients, other people who are receiving nursing care or services, co-workers and allied professionals. The *Code* is foundational and to be built upon in combination with the laws, regulations and professional standards of countries that govern nursing practice. The values and obligations expressed in this *Code* apply to nurses in all settings, roles and domains of practice.

## PREAMBLE

From the origins of organised nursing in the mid-1800s and recognising nursing care is deeply rooted in the traditions and practices of equity and inclusion and in the appreciation of diversity, nurses have consistently recognised four fundamental nursing responsibilities: to promote health, to prevent illness, to restore health, and to alleviate suffering and promote a dignified death. The need for nursing is universal.

Inherent in nursing is a respect for human rights, including cultural rights, the right to life and choice, the right to dignity and to be treated with respect. Nursing care is respectful of and unrestricted by considerations of age, colour, culture, ethnicity, disability or illness, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, politics, language, race, religious or spiritual beliefs, legal, economic or social status.

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**1** The practice of the nursing student needs to be in line with the *ICN Code of Ethics*. Depending on the level of education, the responsibility for the student nurse's conduct is shared between the student and her/his supervisor.

Nurses are valued and respected for their contributions to improving the health of individuals, families, communities and populations locally, nationally and globally. They coordinate services with those of other health care professionals and related groups. Nurses demonstrate values of the profession such as respect, justice, empathy, responsiveness, caring, compassion, trustworthiness and integrity.

## THE ICN CODE

The *ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses* has four principal elements that provide a framework for ethical conduct: nurses and patients or other people requiring care or services, nurses and practice, nurses and the profession, and nurses and global health.

## APPLYING THE ELEMENTS OF THE CODE

The charts that follow the description of each element of the *Code* are intended to assist nurses to translate the standards into action. Note that these charts present examples of the main tenets included in the elements of the *Code* and are not intended to be an exhaustive or complete list of concepts. The ethical duties and values of nursing apply to all forms of nursing services and roles: clinicians, educators, students, researchers, managers, policy makers and others. Professional associations are also guided by these duties and values. A diagram (p. 21) illustrates the relationship of the values and duties to the nursing profession.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR USE of the *ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses*

The *ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses* is a guide for action based on social values and needs. It will have meaning only as a living document if applied to the realities of nursing and health care in all settings in which nursing care is delivered.

To achieve its purpose the *Code* must be understood, internalised and used by nurses in all aspects of their work. It must be available to students and nurses throughout their study and work lives.

### Nurses can therefore:

- Study the standards under each element of the *Code*.
- Personally reflect on what each standard means. Think about ways to apply ethics to the personal domain of nursing practice, education, research, management, leadership or policy development.
- Discuss the *Code* with co-workers and others.
- Use a specific example from experience to identify ethical dilemmas and standards of conduct as outlined in the *Code*. Identify ways in which the *Code* guides in the resolution of dilemmas.
- Work in groups to clarify ethical decision making and reach a consensus on standards of ethical conduct.
- Collaborate with the National Nurses Association, co-workers, and others in the continuous application of ethical standards in nursing practice, education, management, research and policy.

## DISSEMINATION of the *ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses*

To be effective the *ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses* must be familiar to nurses. We encourage its dissemination to schools of nursing, nurses in their workplace, the nursing press and other mass media. The *Code* should also be disseminated to other health professions, the general public, consumer and policy-making groups, human rights organisations and employers of nurses. NNAs are encouraged to adopt this *Code*, translating it into local language(s), or use it as a framework to support their own codes of nursing ethics.





# 1. NURSES AND PATIENTS OR OTHER PEOPLE REQUIRING CARE OR SERVICES<sup>2</sup>

- 1.1 **Nurses'** primary professional responsibility is to people requiring nursing care and services now or in the future, whether individuals, families, communities or populations (hereinafter referred to as either 'patients' or 'people requiring care').
- 1.2 **Nurses** promote an environment in which the **human rights, values,** customs, religious and spiritual beliefs of the individual, families and communities are acknowledged and respected by everyone. **Nurses'** rights are included under **human rights** and should be upheld and protected.
- 1.3 **Nurses** ensure that the individual and **family** receive understandable, accurate, sufficient and timely information in a manner appropriate to the patient's culture, linguistic, cognitive and physical needs, and psychological state on which to base consent for care and related treatment.
- 1.4 **Nurses** hold in confidence **personal information** and respect the **privacy, confidentiality** and interests of patients in the lawful collection, use, access, transmission, storage and disclosure of **personal information**.
- 1.5 **Nurses** respect the **privacy** and **confidentiality** of colleagues and people requiring care and uphold the integrity of the nursing profession in person and in all media, including **social media**.
- 1.6 **Nurses** share with society the responsibility for initiating and supporting action to meet the health and social needs of all people.
- 1.7 **Nurses** **advocate** for **equity** and **social justice** in resource allocation, access to health care and other social and economic services.
- 1.8 **Nurses** demonstrate professional **values** such as respect, justice, responsiveness, caring, compassion, empathy, trustworthiness and integrity. They support and respect the dignity and universal rights of all people, including patients, colleagues and families.

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2 The two terms 'patients' and 'people requiring care or nursing services' are used interchangeably. The two terms refer to the patient, family, community and populations requiring nursing care and services. Practice settings span across hospital, home and community care, primary care, public health, population health, long term care, correctional care, academic institutions and government and are not limited to sectors.

- 1.9 **Nurses** facilitate a culture of safety in health care environments, recognising and addressing threats to people and safe care in health practices, services and settings.
- 1.10 **Nurses** provide **evidence-informed**, **person-centred care**, recognising and using the **values** and principles of **primary health care** and health promotion across the lifespan.
- 1.11 **Nurses** ensure that the use of technology and scientific advances are compatible with the safety, dignity and rights of people. In the case of artificial intelligence or devices, such as care robots or drones, **nurses** ensure that care remains **person-centred** and that such devices support and do not replace human relationships.

Applying the Elements of the <i>Code #1</i> : NURSES AND PATIENTS OR PEOPLE REQUIRING CARE OR SERVICES		
Nurses, Nurse Leaders and Nurse Managers	Educators and Researchers	National Nurses Associations
Provide people focused, culturally appropriate, care that respects <b>human rights</b> and is sensitive to the <b>values</b> , customs and beliefs of people without prejudice or unjust discrimination.	In curricula, include content on cultural norms, safety and <b>competence</b> , <b>ethics</b> , <b>human rights</b> , <b>equity</b> , human dignity, justice, disparities and solidarity as the basis for access to health care. Design studies to explore <b>human rights</b> issues.	Develop position statements, standards of practice and guidelines that support <b>human rights</b> and ethical standards.

**Applying the Elements of the Code #1:  
NURSES AND PATIENTS OR PEOPLE REQUIRING CARE  
OR SERVICES**

<b>Nurses, Nurse Leaders and Nurse Managers</b>	<b>Educators and Researchers</b>	<b>National Nurses Associations</b>
<p>Participate in continuing education on ethical issues, ethical reasoning and ethical conduct. Encourage open dialogue among all stakeholders.</p>	<p>Design curricula to encompass currently peer reviewed and published approaches to nursing <b>ethics</b>. Provide teaching and learning opportunities for ethical issues, ethical principles and reasoning, and ethical decision making. This includes respect for autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence and justice.</p>	<p>Establish standards for <b>ethics</b> education and provide continuing <b>ethics</b> education for <b>nurses</b>.</p>
<p>Ensure informed consent for nursing and/or medical care. This includes the right to choose or refuse treatments.</p>	<p>Educate about respect for autonomy, informed consent, <b>privacy</b> and <b>confidentiality</b>. Respect research participants' right to refuse to participate in or withdraw from studies without prejudice.</p>	<p>Provide guidelines for human participants in research, position statements, relevant documentation and continuing education related to informed consent for nursing and medical care.</p>

**Applying the Elements of the Code #1:  
NURSES AND PATIENTS OR PEOPLE REQUIRING CARE  
OR SERVICES**

<b>Nurses, Nurse Leaders and Nurse Managers</b>	<b>Educators and Researchers</b>	<b>National Nurses Associations</b>
<p>Exercise professional ethical judgement in the use of information, health records and reporting systems, whether electronic or paper-based, to ensure protection of <u>human rights</u>, <u>confidentiality</u> and <u>privacy</u> in accord with patient preferences and community safety and in compliance with any relevant laws.</p>	<p>In curricula, include accuracy, <u>confidentiality</u> and <u>privacy</u> on the use of media, reporting and recording systems, whether images, recordings, or comments. Be familiar with the use of required reporting for extreme emergencies.</p>	<p>Prepare guidelines and standards of practice on appropriate use of information and reporting systems that ensure protection of <u>human rights</u>, <u>confidentiality</u>, <u>privacy</u>, and mandated reporting mechanisms for public health outbreaks or extreme emergencies.</p>
<p>Communicate to appropriate supervisors and/or authorities any risks, inappropriate behaviours or misuse of technologies that threaten people's safety, and provide facts supporting this. <u>Nurses</u> need to be involved when technology is developed, and observe and report risks with technology and scientific advancements.</p>	<p>Include in curriculum and conduct research on what constitutes safe care that respects dignity and rights and considers new technology.</p>	<p>Lobby governments, health organisations, medical device and pharmaceutical companies to include <u>nurses</u> during research and development of technology for patient use.</p>

**Applying the Elements of the Code #1:  
NURSES AND PATIENTS OR PEOPLE REQUIRING CARE  
OR SERVICES**

Nurses, Nurse Leaders and <u>Nurse Managers</u>	Educators and Researchers	<u>National Nurses Associations</u>
<p>Meet nurses' ethical obligations and responsibilities and actively affirm the <u>values</u> and ideals of the profession.</p>	<p>In curricula, include professional <u>values</u> and ideals, ethical responsibilities and obligations, and ethical frameworks with worldviews. Contribute to and disseminate emphasis on ethical research guidelines. Design studies to explore <u>human rights</u> issues.</p>	<p>Express the <u>values</u> and ideals of nursing in their foundational documents and incorporate into national codes of <u>ethics</u> for nurses.</p>
<p>Develop and monitor safety in the workplace.</p>	<p>Teach and facilitate learning about attributes, risk factors and skills to ensure practice environments that are healthy, safe and sustainable for everyone in the health care setting.</p>	<p>Influence employers to promote healthy and safe workplaces for <u>nurses</u> and other health care workers. Provide guidelines that assure a safe environment and healthy communities. <u>Advocate</u> for clear, accessible, transparent and effective reporting procedures to protect health and safety.</p>

## 2. NURSES AND PRACTICE

- 2.1 **Nurses** carry personal responsibility and accountability for ethical nursing practice, and for maintaining **competence** by engaging in continuous professional development and lifelong learning.
- 2.2 **Nurses** maintain **fitness to practice** so as not to compromise their ability to provide quality, safe care.
- 2.3 **Nurses** practise within the limits of their individual **competence** and regulated or authorised scope of practice and use professional judgement when accepting and delegating responsibility.
- 2.4 **Nurses** value their own dignity, well-being and health. To achieve this requires positive practice environments, characterised by professional recognition, education, reflection, support structures, adequate resourcing, sound management practices and occupational health and safety.
- 2.5 **Nurses** maintain standards of personal conduct at all times. They reflect well on the profession and enhance its image and public confidence. In their professional role, **nurses** recognise and maintain personal relationship boundaries.
- 2.6 **Nurses** share their knowledge and expertise and provide feedback, mentoring and supporting the professional development of student nurses, novice nurses, colleagues and other health care providers.
- 2.7 **Nurses** are patient **advocates**, and they maintain a practice culture that promotes ethical behaviour and open dialogue.
- 2.8 **Nurses** may **conscientiously object** to participating in particular procedures or nursing or health-related research but must facilitate respectful and timely action to ensure that people receive care appropriate to their individual needs.
- 2.9 **Nurses** maintain a person's right to give and withdraw consent to access their personal, health and genetic information. They protect the use, **privacy** and **confidentiality** of genetic information and human genome technologies.
- 2.10 **Nurses** take appropriate actions to safeguard individuals, families, communities and populations when their health is endangered by a co-worker, any other person, policy, practice or misuse of technology.
- 2.11 **Nurses** are active participants in the promotion of patient safety. They promote ethical conduct when errors or near misses occur, speak up when patient safety is threatened, **advocate** for transparency, and work with others to reduce the potential of errors.

2.12 **Nurses** are accountable for data integrity to support and facilitate ethical standards of care.

**Applying the Elements of the Code #2:  
NURSES AND PRACTICE**

<b>Nurses, Nurse Leaders and <u>Nurse Managers</u></b>	<b>Educators and Researchers</b>	<b><u>National Nurses Associations</u></b>
<p>Pursue professional development through reading and study. Request and participate in continuing education to enhance knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>Teach and facilitate learning the value and obligation of lifelong learning and <b><u>competence</u></b> to practice. Explore current concepts and innovative teaching methods for theory and practice.</p>	<p>Develop a range of continuing education opportunities, through journals, media, conferences and distance education, that reflects advances in nursing theory and practice.</p>
<p>Initiate continuing education and participate in workplace governance, systems for professional performance, appraisal and systematic renewal of licensure to practice. Monitor, promote and evaluate <b><u>fitness to practice</u></b> in nursing staff.</p>	<p>Conduct and disseminate research that explores links between continual learning and <b><u>competence</u></b> to practice.</p>	<p>Promote national policies for high quality <b><u>nurse</u></b> education and educational requirements for continued authorisation to practice.</p>
<p>Seek a work-life balance, ongoing personal growth, and maintain a healthy lifestyle.</p>	<p>Teach obligations to self as well as obligations to patients, the importance of <b><u>fitness to practice</u></b>, and using <b><u>evidence-informed</u></b> care. In curricula, include promoting resilience in the workplace.</p>	<p>Lobby for working environments that promote healthy lifestyle standards for <b><u>nurses</u></b>. Provide guidelines on safe and decent work conditions for <b><u>nurses</u></b>.</p>

**Applying the Elements of the Code #2:  
NURSES AND PRACTICE**

<b>Nurses, Nurse Leaders and <u>Nurse Managers</u></b>	<b>Educators and Researchers</b>	<b><u>National Nurses Associations</u></b>
<p>Foster interprofessional collaboration for managing conflict and tensions. Promote an environment of shared ethical <u>values</u>. To improve quality of care and safety, fear of reprisal must be extinguished. This will create a more open, transparent culture that embraces crucial conversations for advancing health for all.</p>	<p>Teach methods and skills of situational assessment and conflict management as well as the roles and <u>values</u> of other health care disciplines.</p>	<p>Inform other disciplines and the public about the roles of <u>nurses</u> and the <u>values</u> of the nursing profession. Promote a positive image of nursing. Champion work environments and conditions that are free from abuse, harassment and violence.</p>
<p>Develop appropriate <u>professional relationships</u> with patients and colleagues; exercise professional judgement and decline gifts or bribes and avoid conflicts of interest.</p>	<p>Maintain and teach professional boundaries and skills to safeguard them. Teach identification of and methods to avoid conflicts of interest.</p>	<p>Set standards for professional boundaries and establish processes for the expression of recognition and gratitude.</p>
<p>Assure continuity of care for the patient when exercising <u>conscientious objection</u>, where an action may cause harm or is morally objectionable to the <u>nurse</u>.</p>	<p>Encourage <u>self-reflection</u> and teach frameworks and processes of <u>conscientious objection</u>.</p>	<p>Develop standards and guidelines for refusal of participation in specific medical procedures. Include guidance on <u>conscientious objection</u> in national codes of <u>ethics</u>.</p>

### 3. NURSES AND THE PROFESSION

- 3.1 **Nurses** assume the major leadership role in determining and implementing **evidence-informed**, acceptable standards of clinical nursing practice, management, research and education.
- 3.2 **Nurses** and nursing scholars are active in expanding research-based, current professional knowledge that supports **evidence-informed** practice.
- 3.3 **Nurses** are active in developing and sustaining a core of professional values
- 3.4 **Nurses**, through their professional organisations, participate in creating a positive and constructive practice environment where practice encompasses clinical care, education, research, management and leadership. This includes environments which facilitate a nurse's ability to practice to their optimal scope of practice and to deliver safe, effective and timely health care, in working conditions which are safe as well as socially and economically equitable for **nurses**.
- 3.5 **Nurses** contribute to positive and ethical organisational environments and challenge unethical practices and settings. Nurses collaborate with nursing colleagues, other (health) disciplines and relevant communities to engage in the ethical creation, conduct and dissemination of peer reviewed and ethically responsible research and practice development as they relate to patient care, nursing and health.
- 3.6 **Nurses** engage in the creation, dissemination and application of research that improves outcomes for individuals, families and communities.
- 3.7 **Nurses** prepare for and respond to emergencies, disasters, conflicts, epidemics, pandemics, social crises and conditions of scarce resources. The safety of those who receive care and services is a responsibility shared by individual **nurses** and the leaders of health systems and organisations. This involves assessing risks and developing, implementing and resourcing plans to mitigate these.

**Applying the Elements of the Code #3:  
NURSES AND THE PROFESSION**

Nurses, Nurse Leaders and <u>Nurse Managers</u>	Educators and Researchers	<u>National Nurses Associations</u>
Collaborate with colleagues to support the conduct, dissemination and use of research related to patient care, nursing and health.	Teach research methodology, <u>ethics</u> and evaluation. Conduct, disseminate, utilise and evaluate research to study and advance nursing knowledge.	Develop position statements, guidelines, policy and standards informed by nursing research and scholarly inquiry.
Promote participation in <u>national nurses' associations</u> to create solidarity and cooperation to promote favourable socio-economic and working conditions for nurses.	Emphasise to learners the nature, function and importance of professional nursing associations and international nursing collaboration.	Communicate the importance of membership in professional nursing organisations and promote participation in <u>national nurses' associations</u> .
Practice ethical behaviours and develop strategies to deal with moral distress during emergent crises, such as pandemics or conflicts.	Prepare students for local response to global issues with a broader vision of solidarity and the common good. Include health disparities, particularly for infants, frail elderly, prisoners, economically disadvantaged, trafficked, displaced persons and refugees.	Collaborate with global organisations to address current and emergent <u>social justice</u> issues.

**Applying the Elements of the *Code #3*:  
NURSES AND THE PROFESSION**

Nurses, Nurse Leaders and <u>Nurse Managers</u>	Educators and Researchers	<u>National Nurses Associations</u>
<p>Develop guidelines for workplace issues, such as bullying, violence, sexual harassment, fatigue, safety, and local incident management. Participate in studies regarding <u>ethics</u> and ethical workplace issues in every setting.</p>	<p>Teach identification of unhealthy work environments and skills to develop resilient and healthy workplace communities. Conduct research on ethical workplace issues across the profession.</p>	<p>Influence, pressure and negotiate for fair and decent working conditions. Develop position statements and guidelines to address workplace issues.</p>
<p>Prepare for and respond to emergencies, disasters, conflicts, epidemics, pandemics and conditions of scarce resources.</p>	<p>Ensure that curricula include essential elements of caring for people and populations in high risk, challenging environments.</p>	<p><u>Advocate</u> and lobby governments and health organisations to prioritise. and protect the health, safety and well-being of health care workers during a response to health emergencies.</p>
<p>Practice non-discrimination against colleagues from other cultures and countries regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity or language.</p>	<p>Teach the principles of the WHO <i>Code of Practice on International Recruitment of Health Personnel</i> to support the ethical recruitment of <u>nurses</u>.</p>	<p>Promote the ethical recruitment of <u>nurses</u> and work with government and licensing boards to reduce barriers to employment for migrant <u>nurses</u>.</p>

## 4. NURSES AND GLOBAL HEALTH

- 4.1 **Nurses** value health care as a human right, affirming the right to universal access to health care for all.
- 4.2 **Nurses** uphold the dignity, freedom and worth of all human beings and oppose all forms of exploitation, such as human trafficking and child labour.
- 4.3 **Nurses** lead or contribute to sound health policy development.
- 4.4 **Nurses** contribute to population health and work towards the achievement of the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs). (UN n.d.)
- 4.5 **Nurses** recognise the significance of the **social determinants of health**. They contribute to, and **advocate** for, policies and programmes that address them.
- 4.6 **Nurses** collaborate and practise to preserve, sustain and protect the natural environment and are aware of the health consequences of environmental degradation, e.g. climate change. They **advocate** for initiatives that reduce environmentally harmful practices to promote health and well-being.
- 4.7 **Nurses** collaborate with other health and social care professions and the public to uphold principles of justice by promoting responsibility in **human rights**, **equity** and fairness and by promoting the public good and a healthy planet.
- 4.8 **Nurses** collaborate across countries to develop and maintain global health and to ensure policies and principles for this.

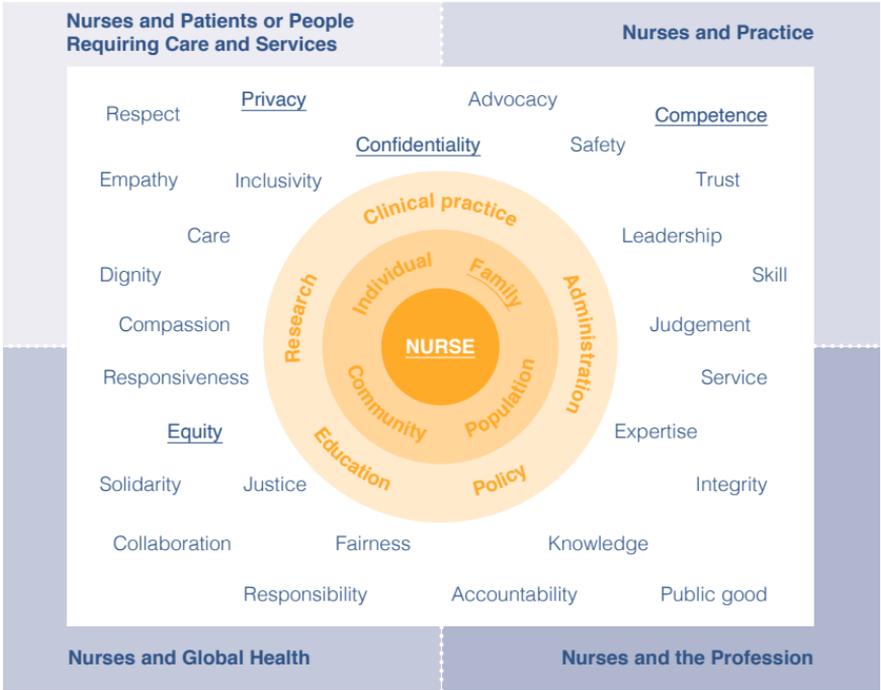
**Applying the Elements of the Code #4:  
NURSES AND GLOBAL HEALTH**

Nurses, Nurse Leaders and <u>Nurse Managers</u>	Educators and Researchers	<u>National Nurses Associations</u>
<p>Participate in <u>human rights</u> efforts, such as trafficking prevention and detection, helping vulnerable populations, providing universal education, and mitigating hunger and poverty.</p>	<p>Ensure that curricula include <u>human rights</u>, <u>SDGs</u>, universal access to care, culturally appropriate care, civic responsibility, <u>equity</u>, and social and <u>environmental justice</u>.</p>	<p>Collaborate with nursing regulatory bodies, voluntary organisations, and global agencies to develop position statements and guidelines that support <u>human rights</u>, <u>environmental justice</u> and international peace.</p>
<p>Educate oneself and colleagues about global health, including current and emergent technologies. <u>Advocate</u> for the ethical use of technology and scientific advances compatible with safety, dignity, <u>privacy</u>, <u>confidentiality</u> and <u>human rights</u>.</p>	<p>Seek opportunities to evaluate the short and long-term ethical consequences of the use of diverse technologies and emerging practices, including innovative equipment, robotics, <u>genetics</u> and <u>genomics</u>, stem cell technologies and organ donation.</p>	<p>Contribute to legislation and policies on the ethical use of technology and scientific advances adapted to the health and social norms and context of the country.</p>
<p>Acquire and disseminate knowledge about the negative effects of climate change on people's health and on the planet.</p>	<p>Teach about the facts and consequences of climate change on health and the many opportunities to support climate health at policy and institutional levels.</p>	<p>Participate in the development of legislation to reduce the impact of hospitals and the health care industry on the environment and address climate changes that negatively affect the health of populations.</p>

**Applying the Elements of the Code #4:  
NURSES AND GLOBAL HEALTH**

Nurses, Nurse Leaders and <u>Nurse Managers</u>	Educators and Researchers	<u>National Nurses Associations</u>
<p>Support the ethical and proficient use of <b>social media</b> and technologies to improve population health consistent with the <b>values</b> of the nursing profession.</p>	<p>Participate in developing, implementing and evaluating new and emerging technologies, including <b>social media</b>, for prevention initiatives, public health education, and the health and well-being of populations. Prepare curricula and engage in research in support of the UN <b>SDGs</b>.</p>	<p>Update knowledge and increase awareness about the UN <b>SDGs</b> for population health and actively strategize nursing's participation in achieving these goals.</p>
<p>Act on local and global issues that affect health, such as poverty, food security, shelter, immigration, gender, class, ethnicity, race, environmental health, dignified work, and education.</p>	<p>Educate about socio-political and economic issues that affect health, including gender, ethnicity, race, culture, inequality and discrimination. Research socio-political factors that contribute to individual and population health and illness.</p>	<p>Collaborate with other national and international nursing organisations to formulate policies and legislation that address the <b>socio-economic determinants of health</b>.</p>
<p>Embed the concepts of peace, peace diplomacy and peace building into everyday practice.</p>	<p>Educate and research for peace diplomacy and peace building in communities and globally.</p>	<p>Collaborate globally, nationally and regionally with governments and nursing agencies to further the ends of global peace and justice and ameliorate the causes of illness.</p>

# ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses Professional Values







<b>Advocate</b>	Actively supporting a right and good cause; supporting others in speaking for themselves or speaking on behalf of others who cannot speak for themselves. Advocacy is ultimately carried through with consent from the person themselves.
<b>Competence</b>	The integrated knowledge, skills, judgement and attributes required of a nurse to practise safely and ethically in a designated role and setting.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	Confidentiality refers to the duty of the nurse to refrain from sharing patient information with third parties unrelated to the patient's care. Confidentiality is a limited duty, sometimes it may be overridden by law or regulation, e.g. mandated reporting of specific diseases.
<b>Conscientious objection</b>	Refusing to participate in required action, or seeking exemption from participation in classes of interventions (e.g. abortion, gender reassignment surgery, organ transplantation) that threaten a person's sense of moral integrity. It also includes refusal to participate in an action or intervention perceived to be inappropriate for a specific patient or it ignores the patient's wishes.
<b>Co-workers</b>	Nurses and other health and non-health related workers and professionals.
<b>Environmental justice</b>	Environmental justice seeks an equitable distribution of benefits (e.g., pure water, green spaces, clean air), and a safe and equitable distribution of burdens (e.g. toxic waste disposal, noise, factory air pollution). It includes sustainability, representative participation, and the avoidance of environmental discrimination.
<b>Equity</b>	Equity is an aspect of social justice. It refers to an absence of systemic disadvantages that result in health disparities for particular segments of society. Equity is essential to the full recognition of human rights.
<b>Ethics</b>	A branch of philosophy. Applied normative ethics is most commonly used in health care and professional ethics. It helps to determine the "ought" at the social, community or individual level. It also addresses broad social issues such as human rights, global cooperation, climate change, global pandemics, social-structural disparities.
<b>Evidence-Informed Practice</b>	Evidence-informed practice (EIP) is a process for making informed clinical decisions. Research evidence is integrated with clinical experience, patient values, preferences and circumstances. (Woodbury & Kuhnke 2014)

<b>Family</b>	A social unit composed of members connected through blood, kinship, emotional or legal relationships.
<b>Fitness to practice</b>	Having the skills, knowledge, health and character to do one's job safely and effectively. (UK NMC 2021)
<b>Genetics</b>	The study of single genes, genetic variation and heredity in organisms.
<b>Genomics</b>	The study of the complete set of a person's genes, the genome, to find variations that affect health, drug response, interactions among genes or with the environment.
<b>Human rights</b>	Human rights are inherent to all persons, regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. They range from the most fundamental – the right to life – to the rights to food, education, work, health, healthy living conditions, and liberty. (Adapted from OHCHR n.d.)
<b>National Nurses Associations (NNAs)</b>	Any professional national nursing group that clarifies, researches, educates and promotes the continued development of nurses and nursing.
<b>Nurse</b>	The nurse is a person who has completed a programme of basic, generalised nursing education and is authorised by the appropriate regulatory authority to practice nursing in his/her country. Basic nursing education is a formally recognised programme of study providing a broad and sound foundation in the behavioural, life and nursing sciences for the general practice of nursing, for a leadership role, and for post-basic education for speciality or advanced nursing practice. The nurse is prepared and authorised (1) to engage in the general scope of nursing practice, including the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and care of physically ill, mentally ill, and disabled people of all ages and in all healthcare and other community settings; (2) to carry out healthcare teaching; (3) to participate fully as a member of the healthcare team; (4) to supervise and train nursing and healthcare auxiliaries; and (5) to be involved in research. (ICN 1987)
<b>Nurse manager</b>	A nurse manager is responsible for the daily operations of a nursing unit and supervising the nursing personnel in a particular unit or department.
<b>Personal information</b>	Information obtained during professional contact that is private to an individual or family, and which, when disclosed, may violate the right to privacy, cause inconvenience, embarrassment, or harm to the individual or family.

<b>Person-centred care</b>	Valuing and respecting the characteristics, attributes and preferences of the patient, such as cultural and religious beliefs, and incorporating them into the planning and implementation of nursing care, services or programmes design.
<b>Professional relationship</b>	A professional relationship is an ongoing interaction between two people that observes a set of established boundaries or limits that is deemed appropriate under governing ethical standards.
<b>Primary Health Care</b>	Primary health care is a whole-of-society approach to health and well-being centred on the needs and preferences of individuals, families and communities. It addresses the broader determinants of health and focuses on the comprehensive and interrelated aspects of physical, mental and social health and well-being. (WHO 2019)
<b>Privacy</b>	Privacy is the right to freedom from intrusion into one's personal matters, information, or one's physical body.
<b>Related groups</b>	Other nurses, health care workers or other professionals providing service to an individual, family or community and working toward desired goals.
<b>Self-determination</b>	The right to have one's autonomous decisions respected. Self-determination is not absolute. It may be limited by cognitive or affective incapacity, age of majority, potential for harm to oneself or others, or the infringement of the liberty of others.
<b>Self-reflection</b>	The ability to evaluate one's own thoughts, plans and actions in relation to ethical responsibilities and ethical guidelines.
<b>Social determinants of health</b>	The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels. The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities, i.e. the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries. (WHO 2020)
<b>Social justice</b>	Achieving equity and equality for society and the profession (ICN Strategic Plan 2019-2023). Social justice is a form of fairness requiring an impartial distribution of social goods and benefits and an equally impartial distribution of social burdens and affirms universal human rights. Social inequalities may exist only in order to benefit the least advantaged in society. Social justice applies to all persons, whether citizen or non-citizen.

## Social media

Social media is an umbrella term used to describe social interaction through technology-based tools, many of which are online. This includes, but is not limited to internet forums, blogs, and networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. (Institute of Business Ethics 2019)

## Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all people. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The 17 Goals are all interconnected and, in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve them all by 2030. (UN n.d.)

## Values

Values in nursing are those ends sought by both the profession and in nurse – patient relationships. These include, for example, health, dignity, respect, compassion, equity, inclusivity. Note that some values (ends) are also obligations (actions) and attributes of character (virtues).

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