



## **RESOLUTION No. 10) ESTABLISHING NURSE-TO-PATIENT RATIOS THROUGH COLLECTIVE PATIENT ADVOCACY**

**The 29<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Public Services International (PSI),  
meeting in Durban, South Africa, on 27-30 November 2012**

### **NOTES the following:**

As pressure on national health systems builds to cut budgets and “do more with less”, registered nurses have responded with a global effort to improve clinical outcomes, reduce facility-acquired infections, and maintain an experienced workforce. Establishing minimum ratios of patients per nurse is the key element of these efforts.

Based on the experience of such ratios in the state of California in the United States, nurse-to-patient ratios save lives. Linda Aiken of the University of Pennsylvania, who authored a key 2010 study of nurse-to-patient ratios, found that what happens in California is relevant for other jurisdictions. Specifically, the Aiken study of 1.1 million patients in 2005 and 2006 found that the nurse-to-patient ratios mandated in California could have saved the lives of 468 patients in New Jersey and Pennsylvania over a two-year period.

Linda Aiken, who led the study and directs the Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Research at Penn, said improved nurse staffing likely could save “many thousands a year.”

A review of this and other research, and based on the actual experience of registered nurses working under ratios, including in New South Wales, Australia, shows that

- As a result of the improved working conditions that ratios created, registered nurses are staying in the hospitals;
- As a result of the ratio law, there is no nursing shortage in California;
- Ratios ensure that the 15-30% of new grads who leave their hospital job in the first year, instead stay in the hospitals;
- Impact on patient care has been very positive - from the staff nurse perspective;
- Because retention rates go up, and there is less turn-over, more stable workforce and improved patient care, ratios save hospitals money.

Winning such ratios, requires collective patient advocacy. We recognize the importance of collective patient advocacy to the public health and the integrity of professional nursing standards of care, especially in the fight against erosion, restructuring, degradation, deregulation, and abolition through privatization schemes and expansion of the role of the large health care corporations, hospital chains, pharmaceutical corporations, and other powerful economic institutions and interests which today seek to control the availability, access, and quality of health care services for purposes of profit and surplus revenue generation against the interest of patients and health care consumers.

Implementing safe staffing in all clinical settings is part of making health security a fundamental human right, a guarantee and entitlement to humane health care for all people, providing health care services equally to all individuals according to uniform standards of care, and free from interference or denial by reason of the commercial, economic, or fiscal interests or priorities of private or public entities, enterprises, associations, or persons.

Nurse to patient ratios can help maintain publicly-funded universal health care systems and implement a single standard of care for all people.

Registered nurses must have sufficient control over working and practice conditions to allow for unfettered, independent determination and provision of care in the exclusive interests of patients, which can only occur when staffing levels permit the full exercise of clinical judgment

The establishment of such ratios can be achieved through public policy and through collective bargaining, which is the most progressive, democratic and presently effective means for registered nurses to achieve an effective influence and meaningful control over the terms and conditions of their work, necessary to provide care in the exclusive interests of patients.

Education and activism are essential to fulfilling our mission of patient advocacy--political and economic education enables us to find solutions to the corporate domination of our society; activism is the means to implement those solutions.

Moreover, the significant and increasing power of the global economic interests we have engaged in our struggle to control the conditions of our work and practice in order to protect our patients and the public health requires that we seek like-minded organisational and individual allies in the health care industries and all industries; because solidarity is the source of our power in our struggle against global corporate power, we seek to join forces with like-minded organisations without regard for internal distinctions without discrimination on any basis, such as race, colour, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, or political belief.

See all [Congress resolutions](#) including the Program of Action and the Constitution.