



## ALADEFE

Latin and Ibero-American Association of Nursing Schools and Faculties

### TO ALL THE NURSES OF AMERICA IN THE FACE OF THE EXPANSION OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE AMERICAN CONTINENT.



**Dra. Olivia Sanhueza Alvarado**

**President of ALADEFE**

Esteemed nurse colleagues, in all the contexts and places where you may be working, in this vast, diverse and beautiful continent. I address you due to the extension of the Covid-19 pandemic in our continent, it has been a few weeks, and that will probably entail an unprecedented sanitary crisis in all the countries of our beloved America.

As you certainly may have somehow associated, the event by which Florence Nightingale gained worldwide recognition was for her role and aid carried out during the Crimea<sup>1</sup> War; where she minimized the soldiers' mortality from 80% to 20%, by contributing with her knowledge, values and abilities when providing a care characterized by empathy and compassion for human suffering, courage, generosity and solidarity towards the diseased, during all day and night.

And this care, which has maintained the same characteristics and original values, is the same that nurses have been providing, since the beginning of this pandemic in China. In this country, the epicenter of the outbreak, more than 28.000 nurses have gone to the Hubei province to battle the Covid-19, including almost half of the intensive care nurses of the country (5.500).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://biblioteca.ua.es/es/politecnica/exposiciones/florence-nightingale.html>



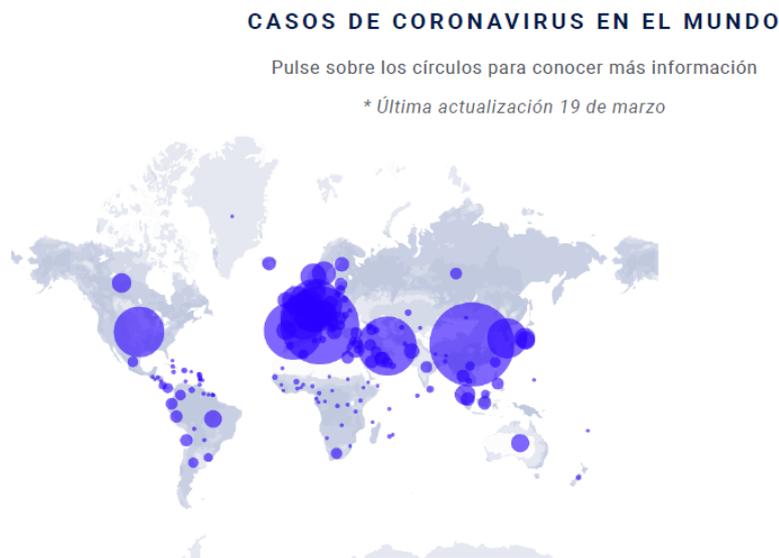
## ALADEFE

Latin and Ibero-American Association of Nursing Schools and Faculties

Their tremendous efforts bore fruit, since they contributed to the recovery of over 44.000 people until now, which means approximately half of the total of people infected.

And as we also already know, the nurses from this side of the world won't be any different. You will keep acting when the pandemic will have rapidly spread throughout America, as we can see in figure 1:

Fig. 1: Coronavirus' map: global spread<sup>2</sup>



Total of confirmed cases: 218.709 people throughout the world.

Total number of de deaths: 8.943 people throughout the world

The objective of this announcement is to show ALADEFE's concern and, at the same time, to the political and health authorities, request a necessary and prompt attention to the working conditions under which nurses and other health professionals are, and will keep working, in order to battle this unknown and grave pandemic.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: [https://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2020-03-17/coronavirus-mapa-covid19-paises\\_2426196/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2020-03-17/coronavirus-mapa-covid19-paises_2426196/)



## ALADEFE

### Latin and Ibero-American Association of Nursing Schools and Faculties

The differences between the working conditions under which nurses carry out their role are very distinct and diverse throughout countries in America: in some of them, there are strong and renowned Nursing organizations, while in others their interference is minor; in other countries there are structural and legal conditions so that this professional handles and performs his or her work in the best conditions, while in others, that doesn't happen; moreover, in other cases, nursing is valued in the health team, as well as socially, while, in others, its influence is smaller; in the majority of the countries, there is a constant lack of Nursing professionals, or also unemployed professionals, among other causes. All these differences are very significant in this hard phase that approaches, whose scale is still hard to envision.

What is certain is that many nurses will perform long, exhausting and stressful work shifts, during which they will be exposed to contamination and a large amount of human suffering. Their physical and mental well-being will possibly be affected, so it is very important the attention and detection, by their employers, to signs and early symptoms, so that advanced protection measures are taken on behalf of health workers, specially nurses, who, as CIE underlined, are the first line of defense (Howard Catton, Director General del CIE). Catton states that, frequently, *we hear that nurses are in the first line of health attention, but in the battle against this new deadly virus, nurses are the first line of defense*<sup>3</sup>.

And so must the governments and political authorities understand, the ones who shall make the decisions in the matters of management and health governance, in order to ensure the control of the pandemic, but also to guarantee that the health workers who will be protecting the population rely on proper conditions to develop their work.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.icn.ch/es/noticias/actualizacion-del-cie-sobre-el-covid-19-la-nueva-orientacion-sobre-salud-mental-y-apoyo>



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Latin and Ibero-American Association of Nursing Schools and Faculties

We have been witnessing, through photography and video records, the relentless work of nurses in places where the pandemic has most hit, such as China, Korea, Iran, Italy and Spain, putting the patients' needs in first place, exposing themselves to risks in their work posts. They make us feel proud, as faculty, when we recognize a part of their education process, by giving us lessons of bravery and humanism.

We wish, from this tribune, to urge the employers and health authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure that nurses have proper rest during and between their shifts; to guarantee the proper and sufficient number of nurses per patient; to count on the appropriate Individual Protection Teams, among other aspects, so that nurses may continue to exert their role with safety and the best possible conditions.

We demand that health authorities, on the other hand, recognize the nurses' leadership and abilities in several matters, such as detection measures, isolation and tracking of patients, which is the backbone of the answer in the face of this pandemic.

We request health and political authorities to ensure that the voices of nurses are heard in the matters of prevention and control of the pandemic. It's vital that their contribution in the planification of political and emergency answers in this kind of matter and in the management of services is recognized, given their profile and abilities of governance and management.

This pandemic, whose final result is still unknown, specially due to the heterogeneous characteristics of Latin America and Caribbean countries, causes apocalyptical predictions to appear, but also has determined that we have gone back to seeing ourselves as a global village, where we all need each other; where the necessity of counting on Nursing management, along with a larger number of nurses in workplaces, has been recognized; where values such as solidarity and compassion are more important than any other human



## ALADEFE

Latin and Ibero-American Association of Nursing Schools and Faculties

characteristic; where we highlight the work of the nurses, for their dedication, value and scientific fundamentals in their actions.

We want to reiterate to all the nurses the importance of taking care of oneself, of requesting help when one sees his or herself being surpassed, of preventing complications derived from the illness and the demands and pressure to which they will be submitted, through which we know that they will do their best to control this pandemic, as well as carrying on their shoulders all the responsibility. But things can't be like that.

In relation to that, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) has updated and highlighted in their page<sup>4</sup> what nurses have gone through during the fight against this pandemic, since its origin in China. We also emphasize that, in this crisis, the consolidated National Nursing Associations have provided vital leadership to nurses and governments.

That was rectified by the President of the Korean Nurses Association (KNA) Kyung-Rim Shin, when she expressed that governments recognize the function of nurses in the first line of defense against the virus, expressing how fundamental is the leadership developed by these Associations.

Annette Kennedy, president of the ICN stressed that the National Nursing Associations are vital organizations and rich in knowledge and nursing experience. And that each nurse who works with these patients is risking his or her health, and we know that many are contracting the virus, despite their best efforts to be safe. Kennedy has requested health services to support nurses and other professionals: the ones working, as well as the ones on

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.icn.ch/es/noticias/actualizacion-del-cie-sobre-el-covid-19-las-asociaciones-nacionales-de-enfermeria-solidas>.



## ALADEFE

Latin and Ibero-American Association of Nursing Schools and Faculties

quarantine, guaranteeing that they have rest breaks, as well as individual protection teams and psychological assistance.

Also, Mr. Catton, General Director of the ICN, stated that the leadership role of the National Nursing Associations has been essential in containing the virus, expressing that the health systems, along with consolidated nursing associations, walk side by side. What we are observing throughout the world is that these associations are going one step further to lead the coordination of nursing management to respond to the Covid-19.

ALADEFE recognizes the Nursing Associations as key elements, to which nurses should formally unite, in a way that they participate and are incorporated in the decision spaces of this and other sanitary emergencies, and that they occupy the place that correspond to them, as strategic professionals in the advance of public health, a concept recognized in the Nursing Now Campaign<sup>5</sup>, which the majority of countries in the world have joined. We also invite you to support the Nursing Directions on a national level, what allows you to be involved in the decision making on a high level, as well as contributing with knowledge and experience in the assistance field, and providing, through the contact with its members, a direct line of information about the field.

Also, the National Nursing Associations are called to undertake a fundamental role of defending the nurses, in order to guarantee their protection; in the request of an increase of a hiring of nurses by virtue of international regulations; in the evaluation of how the epidemic behaves in each country, ensuring and demanding the best work conditions, investigating the number of nurses that have contracted the Covid-19, the conditions in which it was

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.icn.ch/es/que-hacemos/campanas/nursing-now>



## ALADEFE

Latin and Ibero-American Association of Nursing Schools and Faculties

contracted and the resulting complications; among other activities of defense of the profession.

That the nurses receive our fraternal hug and firm support. In this process of urgency in public health, we encourage you to engage with the Nursing Associations, in the hard battle to put an end in this sanitary emergency in America. As the WHO has pointed out: *This is the sanitary crisis that will define our time. The days, weeks and months to come will be a proof of our determination, a proof of our trust in science, and a proof of solidarity*<sup>6</sup>.

Count on ALADEFE: we will be attentive to your situation and offering the necessary support and consultancy.

Dra. Olivia Sanhueza Alvarado

President of ALADEFE

Text translated by Maria Helena Palucci Marziale - Vocal of Internationalization ALADEFE.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.who.int/es/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---16-march-2020>