

## India faces deficit of 2.4 mn nurses as hospitals increase & nursing colleges see fall in admissions

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India faces an acute shortage of nurses. The country is deficit by 2.4 million nurses to reach the nurse-patient ratio of one nurse per 500 patients. At the national level, the density of nurses in India in 2001 was 61 per 1,00,000, compared to 103 for China. In 2015 it was 1.65 million. The shortage is going to get worse at every level of healthcare system due to falling admissions in nursing colleges, said experts.



On the occasion of the International Nurses Day observed annually on May 12, with this year's theme as A Voice to Lead, Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the nursing community expressed that their profession is the single largest group of health professionals in the country. Yet their starting salary is miniscule.

According to Sai Bala, nursing director, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Kochi, Nurses, are an important cog in the healthcare wheel, but do not get the importance or recognition they deserve.

"Nursing profession is extremely dynamic and spontaneous. Although we have a fixed routine, we must be prepared to respond to sudden requirements and have to be on our toes all the time," pointed out Manju M Abraham, regional nursing head, Nightingales Home Health Services.

Due to the acute shortage of nursing staff in India, most nurses remain overwhelmed with work. As hospitals seek accreditation, by putting in place systems and processes in place to improve efficiency. But this puts the time-consuming burden of documentation on nurses, in addition to their other duties, thought it would enhance quality of service, noted Bala.

With the India's health care system is going through a period of transition with the adoption of EMRs (Electronic Medical Reports) helps us to manage patient records seamlessly. EMRs have consistently reported more improvements to nursing care and better health outcomes for patients than nurses working in hospitals without this technology, said Abraham.

Nurses are especially appreciative of how better information often fosters measurable improvements in everything from pneumonia and pressure ulcer prevention to more appropriate screening and better outcomes for patients with chronic conditions. EMRs also provide reminder pop-ups to nurses; this feature is extremely useful while treating a chronically immobilized patient. While we're on the move, EMRs provide a ready access and swift analysis of a patient's condition anytime of the day, she added.

The looming need for specialized nurses is an area that requires urgent consideration. The knowledge gap between a doctor and nurse is already huge, and widening rapidly. The medical profession has branched into specialization and super-specialization, but nursing is still a general science with limited opportunities for professional or intellectual growth. The new trend of allied healthcare professionals has led to the nursing profession being put on the backburner, even as India grapples with a shortfall of nurses, said the nursing director, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Kochi.