

from the PRESIDENT



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The focus of this edition of The Commonwealth Nurse is on mental health. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has estimated that one in five people across the world will experience a mental illness in their lifetime. Twenty per cent of the world's children and adolescents regardless of culture are estimated to have a mental disorder. Women, adolescents and children are particularly vulnerable with mental health laws in most countries providing little protection for them. Research conducted in 2013 by the Indian Law Society Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy in 2013 found that laws in only two Commonwealth countries restrict involuntary admission of minors with mental health problems and laws in only three Commonwealth countries ban irreversible treatments on children with mental health problems.

The CNMF has been working with two Commonwealth countries to reform their mental health legislation to bring it in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Changes to policy and practice need to be based on a sound legislative framework, and mental health practitioners should not be in breach of legislation in providing compassionate, humane and human rights based care. Legislation must be changed to provide a sound foundation on which to base policy and practice. Change to legislation must be the first step.

In other news, the CNMF is preparing for the 24th CNMF Biennial Meeting of Members to be held at the Royal College of Nursing London UK on Friday 5 March 2020. The Biennial Meeting of Members is the decision making body of the CNMF, debating and endorsing constitutional changes, policy statements, and strategic directions so it is important that all CNMF members plan to attend. Observers are also welcome.

The CNMF is also preparing for the 5th Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Conference to be held 6-7 March 2020 in London UK. The theme for the conference is *Celebrate ... nurse and midwives, breaking down barriers, leaving no-one behind*. Presentations will showcase how individual nurses and midwives, or nursing and midwifery groups, associations or institutions are contributing to global health and wellbeing across the lifespan in all settings where they work.

There will be a lot to celebrate in 2020 apart from it being the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale. Nursing and midwifery globally strongly anticipate that the WHO 2020 will be designating 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife and release the long anticipated first State of the World's Nursing Report. I hope you will join the CNMF in our celebrations at the conference.

I was very pleased to have been able to join nurses and midwives from West Africa at the West African College of Nursing conference in Sierra Leone in March. This was such a wonderful opportunity to meet with colleagues, network, and share experiences. Congratulations to the Sierra Leone Nurses Association for excellent conference organization.

I was also able to attend the 13th CNMF Europe Region conference hosted by the Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses in Malta in March. This was an excellent conference with high quality papers and great organization. It is a great privilege to have the opportunity to attend such events and see what wonderful work nurses and midwives across the Commonwealth are doing.

I would encourage all CNMF members and friends to take note of the recommendations from the 2019 Commonwealth Civil Society Policy Forum, and bring these to the attention of your Ministry of Health. The theme of the forum was on universal health coverage (UHC) with a focus on the need to design UHC policies and services that addressed the health needs of vulnerable populations such as people with disabilities; women and girls; young people and children; older men and women; carers; people who are poor; people living in isolated rural or remote communities; other vulnerable groups such as transient populations, refugees and people seeking asylum, people who identify as LGBTQI, people who are homeless, and prisoners – a long list of groups that are so often left behind.