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# Transforming nurses from frontline to front leaders: lesson learned from the pandemic

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The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has changed all aspects of life, including the way people work and interact with each other. During the pandemic, several essential industries, not to mention healthcare workers, have had to endure the chaotic or life-threatening situation to keep working at desks to ensure that the pandemic can be tackled. Their actions are initially a kind of contribution that is rarely noticed by the public, but they have begun to be recognized as the new everyday heroes.

Nurses are the frontline workers among other health workers who face the COVID-19 virus or other deadly infectious disease. Nurses directly provide essential healthcare services where they are most needed, both in hospital and community settings. Not only physical energy will be exploited, but mental sacrifices can also be affected. This phenomenon has been proven by the increase in mortality rate among nurses worldwide. The International Council of Nurses' latest data showed that more than 1500 nurses have died from COVID-19 in 2020 (International Council of Nurses, 2020) and up to 180,000 health and care workers could have died from COVID-19 in 2021 (World Health Organization, 2021). This crisis emerged the demand for nurses who intend and are able to substitute for those who have fallen. This challenging situation leads nurses to be capable of managing the crisis and, at the same time, they can be the new leaders on the frontline.

The lesson learned that can be recorded from the COVID-19 pandemic, is that nurses as the frontline workers continue to manage a tough healthcare facilities environment in order to save many people from COVID-19. They are potential candidates being front leaders as they have had experienced treating clients and community in quite complex ways during the pandemic. Because of that, it is essential to perceive them as future leaders such as by providing greater policy support at a national level. Equal opportunity to contribute to policy making process would create a solid environment for nurses. Standardized regulation on decent job and salaries also needs to be developed in order to protect the welfare of nurses. It goes without saying that nurse's salary in Indonesia varies across sectors, even though the nurses are often going beyond their duties, many of them have been expected to accomplish more with less appreciation. These unfair situations should be transformed into a good situation by equipping the nurses with decent salaries equal to other frontline health workers.

Talent management of nurses also needs to be developed at national level to accommodate regeneration and succession as a leader. This strategy will impact on how nurses can have the same benchmark as other health professions both regionally and nationally. A recent call from the World Health Organization (2020) mandated three pillars of essential aspects, namely, investment, education, jobs and leadership. This pandemic has opened an opportunity for nurses to move up the leadership ladder and expand the leadership position in every setting.

To sum up, we might call the frontline nurses' personnel as heroes in the pandemic era; however, just labelling them without also considering what they have to say eliminates any chance of progress. Concrete policy implementation is crucial, investing in the education sector is inevitable, and bottom-up coordination is critical in ensuring that frontline views are heard. Regardless of whether or not things are optimal, frontline nurses show up and perform their duties as do any leader who serves and protects clients and community.

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