

NEWS FROM BRUSSELS



Word from Senior Policy Advisor Dr. Theodoros Koutroubas

Dear Friends,

ENC's family got bigger since our last Newsletter, with the adhesion of our Italian Colleagues and, our Board richer with a very skilled and distinguished colleague as Vice-President. Is AI a friend or a foe of patients and nurses? I hope you find our news interesting and I look forward to your feedback.

Kind regards
Theo

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

FNOPI adheres to ENC: Working together towards an EU of high-quality healthcare.

Dr Maurizio Zega (FNOPI) new Vice-President of ENC

ENC Present at the 20th Cascais International Health Forum

As AI reshapes patient care, human nurses are pushing back against its creeping influence

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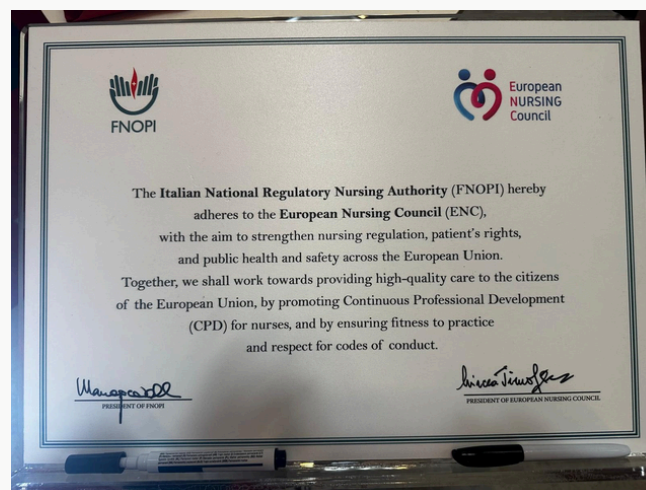


In an emotional ceremony, held during the Congress of the Italian National Regulatory Nursing Authority (FNOPI), that took place in Rimini on March 22nd, FNOPI President Barbara Mangiacavalli, and our President Mircea Timofte, co-signed the document of FNOPI's entrance to the European Nursing Council (ENC).

Our two organisations stressed the necessity to strengthen nursing regulation, patients rights, and public health and safety across the Union, and pledged to work together towards providing high-quality care to the citizens of the European Union, by promoting Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for nurses, and by ensuring fitness to practice and respect of Codes of Conduct.

On behalf of the President, Ms. Roxana Rotocol presented the work of ENC to our Italian colleagues, whilst our Senior Policy Advisor, Professor Dr Theodoros Koutroubas, discussed the challenges that await Nursing and Healthcare in the five years of Von Der Leyen's Commission second term.

The ENC extends its warmest welcome to our new member and looks forward to the strengthening of our work promoting high-quality nursing across the EU



Dr Maurizio Zega New Vice-President of ENC



Dr Maurizio Zega is the President of the Order of the Nursing Professions of Rome, vice President of FNOPI, the National Federation of Orders of the Nursing Professions in Italy, and now: our Vice-President of the European Nursing Council since the 22nd of March.

Dr Zega's brilliant career includes serving as Director of Sitra (Corporate Technical and Rehabilitation Nursing Service) of the Agostino Gemelli IRCCS University Polyclinic Foundation in Rome - Italy and as Assistant Director of the Tiberina-Gemelli Isola Hospital (also in Rome).

Previously, he held several national and regional roles: member of the Technical Secretariat of the Minister of Health; manager at the Public Health Agency of the Lazio Region; Adjunct Professor at the Faculty of Medicine of the Catholic University

of the Sacred Heart in Rome; and Lecturer at the High School of Economics and Management of Health Systems.

With the adhesion of FNOPI to ENC, Dr Zega was selected as the natural candidate to fill the vacant position of Vice-President of ENC given his great experience representing patients and nursing in healthcare, and the historical role of the Italian "Order" in establishing a European body of Nursing Regulators.

ENC Present at the 20th Cascais International Health Forum

From the 20th to the 21st of March, our Senior Policy Advisor, Professor Dr Theodoros Koutroubas, attended the 20th Cascais International Health Forum on behalf of both ENC and CEPLIS. Bringing together health professionals and policy-makers from around the world, with 8 Main Conferences, 9 Plenary Session and 30 Parallel Session hosting over 200 Speakers and 2000 Participants, this gathering of the best and brightest minds in healthcare is a meeting of minds aiming to find innovative solutions to the most pressing issues faced by patients and health professionals through collaboration and exchange.

Dr Koutroubas was invited as a main speaker at a Plenary Session on Healthcare Workforce Challenges where he highlighted the pressing concern of the lack of professionals, especially nurses, and the difficulties in attracting the youth to pursue nursing as a career. Professor Koutroubas was joined by: Miguel Guimarães, Member of the Portuguese Parliament, Vice-President of the PSD Parliamentary Group and Former President of Portuguese Medical Association; Orlando Monteiro da Silva, President of the Portuguese Association of Liberal Professionals and former Chairman for the Portuguese Order of Oral Physicians; Professor Inês Fronteira of ENSP NOVA, President of the Portuguese Epidemiology Association, advisor to the National Ethics Council for Life Sciences (CNECV) and member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the European Health Management Association.

As all of you are aware, the workforce of the healthcare sector internationally faces many common multi-faceted challenges; the Forum is a welcome event to discuss our common issues and how we can best tackle them head-on and resolve them to ensure continued excellence of care for patients and continued quality for the healthcare professionals working tirelessly in this essential sector.



As AI reshapes patient care, human nurses are pushing back against its creeping influence

The following article was adapted from Euronews

In some cases, artificial intelligence (AI) assistants are being used to automate nurses' tasks.

- Several artificial intelligence (AI) companies are offering ways to automate time-consuming tasks usually performed by nurses and medical assistants.
- Hospitals say AI is helping their nurses work more efficiently while addressing burnout and understaffing.
- But nursing unions argue that this poorly understood technology is overriding nurses' expertise and degrading the quality of care patients receive.

"Hospitals have been waiting for the moment when they have something that appears to have enough legitimacy to replace nurses," said Michelle Mahon of National Nurses United.

"The entire ecosystem is designed to automate, de-skill and ultimately replace caregivers".

Mahon's group, the largest nursing union in the United States, has helped organise more than 20 demonstrations at hospitals across the country, pushing for the right to have a say in how AI can be used and protection from discipline if nurses decide to disregard automated advice.

Hippocratic AI initially promoted a rate of \$9 (€8.2) an hour for its AI assistants, compared with about \$40 (€36.7) an hour for a registered nurse.

It has since dropped that practice, instead touting its services and seeking to assure customers that the AI has been carefully tested. The company did not grant requests for an interview.

AI in the hospital can generate false alarms and dangerous advice

Hospitals have been experimenting for years with technology designed to improve care and streamline costs, including sensors, microphones, and motion-sensing cameras.

Now that data is being linked with electronic medical records and analysed in an effort to predict medical problems and direct nurses' care – sometimes before they've evaluated the patient themselves.

Adam Hart was working in the emergency room at Dignity Health in Henderson, Nevada, when the hospital's computer system flagged a newly arrived patient for sepsis, a life-threatening reaction to infection.

Under the hospital's protocol, he was supposed to immediately administer a large dose of IV fluids. But after further examination, Hart determined that he was treating a dialysis patient, or someone with kidney failure. Such patients have to be carefully managed to avoid overloading their kidneys with fluid.

Hart raised his concern with the supervising nurse but was told to just follow the standard protocol. Only after a nearby physician intervened did the patient instead begin to receive a slow infusion of IV fluids.

"You need to keep your thinking cap on - that's why you're being paid as a nurse," Hart said. "Turning over our thought processes to these devices is reckless and dangerous".

Hart and other nurses say they understand the goal of AI: to make it easier for nurses to monitor multiple patients and quickly respond to problems. But the reality is often a barrage of false alarms, sometimes erroneously flagging basic bodily functions – such as a patient having a bowel movement – as an emergency.

Can AI help in the hospital?

Even the most sophisticated technology will miss signs that nurses routinely pick up on, such as facial expressions and odours, notes Michelle Collins, dean of Loyola University's College of Nursing. But people aren't perfect either.

"It would be foolish to turn our back on this completely," Collins said. "We should embrace what it can do to augment our care, but we should also be careful it doesn't replace the human element".

More than 100,000 nurses left the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to one estimate, the biggest staffing drop in 40 years.

As the US population ages and nurses retire, the US government estimates there will be more than 190,000 new openings for nurses every year through 2032.

Faced with this trend, hospital administrators see AI filling a vital role: not taking over care, but helping nurses and physicians gather information and communicate with patients.

'Sometimes they are talking to a human and sometimes they're not'

At the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences in Little Rock, staffers need to make hundreds of calls every week to prepare patients for surgery. Nurses confirm information about prescriptions, heart conditions and other issues, like sleep apnoea, that must be carefully reviewed before anaesthesia.

The problem: many patients only answer their phones in the evening, usually between dinner and their children's bedtime.

Since January, the hospital has used an AI assistant from Qventus to contact patients and health providers, send and receive medical records and summarise their contents for human staffers.

Qventus says 115 hospitals are using its technology, which aims to boost hospital earnings through quicker surgical turnarounds, fewer cancellations, and reduced burnout.

While companies like Qventus are providing an administrative service, other AI developers see a bigger role for their technology.

Israeli start-up, Xoltar, specialises in humanlike avatars that conduct video calls with patients. The company is working with the Mayo Clinic on an AI assistant that teaches patients cognitive techniques for managing chronic pain. The company is also developing an avatar to help smokers quit.

Nursing experts who study AI say such programmes may work for people who are relatively healthy and proactive about their care. But that's not most people in the health system.

"It's the very sick who are taking up the bulk of health care in the US and whether or not chatbots are positioned for those folks is something we really have to consider," said Roschelle Fritz of the University of California Davis School of Nursing.