

# Excellence in Nursing in Colombia—It's Possible!

¡La excelencia en enfermería en Colombia es posible!

A excelência na enfermagem na Colômbia é possível!

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The commitment to excellence in nursing has become a strategic issue and a priority for the development and strengthening of health systems worldwide, particularly in developed countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) has emphasized that investing in nursing is essential to achieving universal health coverage and improving the resilience of health systems (1).

Likewise, recent studies show that healthcare institutions that achieve the highest levels of excellence in nursing also achieve significant improvements in the patient experience thanks to shared governance models and staff empowerment (2). As a result, satisfaction with the professional practice of nursing and the creation of favorable practice environments are associated with lower burn-out, higher quality of care, and better clinical outcomes (3).

Other reports from the WHO and the International Council of Nurses (ICN) state that more than 50% of the global healthcare workforce is made up of nursing professionals; however, one of the main problems is chronic staff shortages. The ICN estimates a shortage of 5.9 million nurses, while the WHO projects that by 2030 at least 30 million additional professionals will be needed to meet global demand. Despite growing awareness of their role in the development and sustainability of health systems, there is a clear need to invest in areas such as the quality of education, working conditions, and participation in organizational decision-making, among others (4). This is the context within which it is necessary to build a collective vision for nursing in Colombia. Undoubtedly, nursing in Colombia is talented, but it also has great opportunities for improvement.

## Why and How Should We Advance in the Pursuit of Excellence in Nursing?

It all starts with recognizing that changing the way we analyze and approach the nursing situation in Colombia has to do with the possibility of turning dreams into reality and problems into opportunities.

Before falling into a deep romanticism about perseverance and resilience, we must turn to the basic principles of the scientific method that, since the time of Aristotle, has sought to solve different phenomena through hypothetical exploration to respond to a problem. It all started with a question: What if we explore the different levers that, considering global evidence, must be mobilized to strengthen nursing and improve outcomes in healthcare institutions?

This, as you will note, is an urgent question. Colombia faces a critical shortage of nursing professionals, with 14.3 per 10000 inhabitants, well below the international standard of 44.3 per 10000 inhabitants, when in reality at least 70.6 are required to guarantee universal health coverage (5). But this challenge cannot be solved simply by increasing the number of professionals; it is about strengthening nursing from its very essence, recognizing its transformative capacity (6).

If the problem is deep-rooted, the solution must be as well. Global evidence emphatically affirms that strengthening nursing transforms clinical outcomes, reduces adverse events, improves the patient and nurse experience, and optimizes the use of resources (7). To achieve this, it is necessary to ensure the movement of strategic transformative levers that directly impact the management of healthcare institutions in a globalized way (8).

Let us look at the *levers* of change:

1. *Education and Knowledge Management*: This is the main dimension of management; it involves exposing, recognizing, and managing deficiencies in professional practice and transforming them into strengths through structured processes focused on personal development. It consists of ensuring and qualifying the nursing team to take on the different challenges in healthcare at all levels. It includes continuing education and postgraduate processes, and research as a fundamental expression of the generation of knowledge useful for practice.
2. *Care Management*: Consists of defining and governing institutional policies and practices regarding nursing care. It results from the ability to quantify, intervene, and challenge clinical outcomes and patient experiences associated with nursing care, compared to the best global benchmarks.
3. *Professionalism*: empowering and challenging nursing professionals to use their knowledge to strengthen autonomy and decision-making in their professional practice, from the patient to management, without neglecting the essence of nursing: care. It is the result of decentralization in decision-making through models such as shared governance.
4. *Strategic Alignment*: This is the expression of a dynamic nursing profession that transforms, adapts, and shapes itself in line with the direction of the institution to which it belongs; it is oriented toward strengthening clinical leadership and incorporating or developing roles that emerge with the strategy. The goal is to generate value.

In this context, Colombia has taken a significant step forward by achieving Magnet accreditation, the highest international recognition in nursing, through the Fundación Santa Fe de Bogotá. This achievement not only honors those who made it possible but also poses the challenge of turning excellence in nursing into a national policy and an essential strategy for the sustainability of the healthcare system.

Magnet accreditation, awarded by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), is based on five pillars that set global standards: 1) transformational leadership, 2) structural empowerment, 3) exemplary professional practice, 4) knowledge generation and innovation, and 5) measurable empirical results.

This program was created in response to a shortage of nurses and sought to identify which organizations were able to retain their staff by creating supportive work environments (9). Implementing this model demonstrates that strengthening nursing through clinical leadership and decision-making at all levels improves health outcomes, increases job satisfaction, and increases talent retention.

This editorial narrative is the expression of more than 1500 committed professionals who comprise the nursing team at Fundación Santa Fe de Bogotá, united in the pursuit of a path defined by excellence to transform lives.

It is an honor to share how our nursing team is transforming health-care in Colombia and beyond, based on five fundamental dimensions:

## 1. Leadership with Excellence

We are the first hospital in Colombia and the second in South America to receive the “Magnet Recognition 2025,” the highest international distinction in nursing awarded by the ANCC. This recognition validates our commitment to quality, safety, and patient-centered care.

## 2. World-Class Professional Practice Model

Our model is based on four pillars:

- Excellence: Comprehensive care with clinical results comparable to the best hospitals in the world.
- Compassion: Care that respects the needs and preferences of each patient.
- Knowledge: Evidence-based practice, supported by continuing education and innovation.
- Leadership: We actively promote the development of the nursing profession in Colombia and Latin America.

## 3. Shared Governance

We implemented a clinical leadership model based on decentralized governance and strengthening the influence of clinical nursing within interdisciplinary management. This approach promotes the empowerment of frontline staff, allowing them to actively participate in strategic decision-making, quality improvement initiatives, and strengthening the patient experience.

This model was recognized by the International Hospital Federation (IHF) as a global benchmark during the “World Hospital Congress 2023,” held in Lisbon, Portugal.

## 4. International Recognition

Our intensive care units have received the 2022 Beacon Award for Excellence in the Silver and Bronze categories, positioning us as leaders in clinical performance and organizational alignment. This designation, awarded by the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN), recognizes intensive care units that demonstrate high standards of nursing care, professional practice, and healthy work environments.

## 5. Impact and Vision

With more than 18 clinical outcome metrics, we rigorously measure the impact of nursing care on patient recovery and well-being, as well as aspects related to the satisfaction and well-being of nursing team members. Below are some exemplary results reported by the ANCC in the Magnet accreditation visit report (2025):

- “Many nurses working in direct care have postgraduate training, including master’s degrees and specialized training. Nurses from all services and shifts clearly expressed the voice of nursing and the influence they have on patient care and its associated outcomes.”
- “Data on nursing staff satisfaction and engagement exceeded the benchmark in the National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators (NDNQI) in seven of the eight selected Magnet categories, representing 87.5% superior performance.”
- “The organization’s data on peripheral intravenous catheter (PIV) infiltration exceeded the benchmark and NDNQI comparison group for most of the eight quarters evaluated, in 100% of hospital units.”
- “Data on falls with injury in outpatient care exceeded the benchmark and the national database comparison group for most of the eight quarters, in 100% of outpatient units.”

Our vision is clear: To be global leaders in humanized, safe, and evidence-based care.

Currently, nursing at the Fundación Santa Fe de Bogotá not only cares, it also transforms. We are ready to collaborate with different sector leaders to further raise healthcare standards in Colombia.

This experience of transformation and commitment to professional development shows that excellence in nursing is not the result of chance, but of an institutional strategy based on evidence and focused on human talent development. Excellence should not be an exception, but the norm, because when nursing leads with quality and excellence, the country progresses in health, dignity, equity, and hope.

In short, excellence in nursing in Colombia is possible! This achievement is not a point of arrival, but rather a starting point and an invitation for us to work together with other institutions, universities, associations, and national authorities to build a path that strengthens the profession.

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