



## AS IT IS

# Nurses Group: Rich Countries Hiring Nurses from Poor Countries

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An international organization of healthcare workers is worried that a shortage of **nurses** and the COVID-19 pandemic will worsen healthcare problems for poor countries.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) represents 27 million nurses worldwide. The ICN said, even before the pandemic, there was already a shortage of 6 million nurses, with 90 percent of the shortages in poorer countries.

Howard Catton leads the Switzerland-based organization. He said increased infections caused by the Omicron **variant** made the nursing shortage even worse. Western nations have dealt with the problems by bringing back retirees and volunteers to the workforce.

Now, Catton said rich countries including the United States, Germany, Canada, and Britain are offering nurses from poor countries more money to come. The nurses come from places like sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. Besides money and better working conditions, he said, some nations also make it easier for nurses to permanently move to new countries.

"I really fear this '**quick fix** solution,'" he said.

Catton compared the situation to a time when wealthy nations bought more face coverings and vaccines than they needed. He added, "if they do that with the nursing workforce it will just make the inequity even worse."

Catton added that rich countries are **taking advantage of** poor countries which educated the nurses but now cannot use their skills at home.

He said healthcare organizations around the world need to start thinking about a 10-year-plan to add more nurses. He said the immediate problem of the COVID-19 pandemic is one thing, but a greater problem is ahead. He explained that people have held off on surgeries and other important procedures during the pandemic. Once the virus is under control and more people come back into hospitals, the nursing shortage will continue.

“We need a **global** effort,” he said. “Not just warm words and **platitudes**.”

I’m Dan Friedell.

*Dan Friedell adapted this story for Learning English based on a report by Reuters.*

*What is your suggestion for keeping nurses from leaving for more money? Write to us in the Comments Section and visit our Facebook page.*

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## Words in This Story

**nurse** – *n.* a person who is trained to care for sick or injured people and who usually works in a hospital or doctor's office

**variant** – *n.* something that is different from a known item that already exists; a change from the usual

**quick fix** – *expression* – something done based on a short-term goal that avoids considering long-term concerns

**take advantage of** – *phrase* – to ask for or expect more than is fair or reasonable from (someone) : to treat (someone who is generous or helpful) unfairly

**global** – *adj.* involving the entire world

**platitude** – *n.* a statement that expresses an idea that is not new

