

76th Session of the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific, 20–24 October 2025

Safer Surgery. Item 14.3

Honourable Chair, distinguished representatives, esteemed colleagues,

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) welcomes the ongoing commitment to safer and more equitable surgical care in the Western Pacific Region. We strongly support the implementation of the WHO Surgical Safety Checklist as a core tool for reducing preventable harm and strengthening team-based surgical practice.

To achieve sustainable improvements in surgical outcomes, access to continuing professional development must be guaranteed for nurses across the surgical care continuum – including those working in perioperative, anaesthetic, and recovery roles. We highlight the ICN *Guidelines on Advanced Practice Nursing – Nurse Anaesthetists* as a resource for supporting optimised models of care, particularly in settings with limited access to physician anaesthetists.

Ensuring safety also depends on fundamental enablers: consistent access to essential infrastructure such as clean water, sanitation, pulse oximetry, and personal protective equipment. These are basic, yet too often lacking.

Safe staffing is critical to safe surgery. Understaffed surgical services compromise patient outcomes and increase the risk of adverse events. Investments must prioritise adequate, appropriately educated and skilled surgical nursing teams.

We also stress the importance of strong and independent regulatory bodies. Effective regulators enable regulated health professionals to practise safely and competently within their scope, protect the public, and uphold professional standards across the health system.

ICN urges Member States to establish and utilise reporting systems for adverse surgical events to drive continuous improvement, accountability, and learning.

Improving surgical care is a shared responsibility. Nurses are critical to delivering safe, timely, and affordable surgical services, and must be fully included in the design and implementation of national strategies.

Thank you.

Links

- ICN 2023 Recover to Rebuild: Investing in the nursing workforce for health system effectiveness – https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/2023-07/ICN_Recover-to-Rebuild_report_EN.pdf
- Guidelines on Advanced Practice Nursing – Nurse Anesthetists – 2021 – <https://www.icn.ch/resources/publications-and-reports/guidelines-advanced-practice-nursing-nurse-anesthetists-2021>