

KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY DR. MURINGO KIEREINI, MBS, EBS DURING THE LAUNCH OF NURSING SCIENCES ALUMNI CHAPTER & 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS – TUESDAY 11TH DECEMBER, 2018 AT NAIROBI SAFARI CLUB

Chancellor, University of Nairobi; Dr. Vijoo Rattansi

Vice Chancellor, University of Nairobi; Prof. Peter Mbithi

Chairman, University of Nairobi Alumni Association; Mr. Isaac Awuondo

Chief Guest; Dr. Dabar Abdi Maalim, Commissioner, Ethics & Anti Corruption Commission and Nursing Sciences Alumnus.

Members of UONAA Executive Board Present

Members of University of Nairobi Management Present

University of Nairobi Alumni

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Evening.

It is with great honored and delight to join the University of Nairobi Alumni Association and the School of Nursing Sciences for the Launch of Nursing Sciences Alumni Chapter and the 50th Anniversary Celebration for the School of Nursing Sciences.

THE HUMANE TOUCH

The first universal practical lesson nurses and medical workers learn is how to wash their hands. From there learning becomes more complex, when you took anatomy, the difficulty in memorizing all the names and spellings made you wonder whether you were in the right profession. But as you continued wading through nursing education and begun to settle down about 50% of your colleagues had dropped out. At this point you would find yourself faced with doubts and whether you would make it through. But in the midst of this uncertainty, names of drugs you could hardly pronounce were introduced, a clear indication of the torture whose intention was to push you out of the school!

Nursing has been a career for those who possess fortitude and courage to continue no matter what. This Courage and determination elucidated by Florence Nightingale, the **Reformer and Founder** of modern nursing is the corner stone of the nursing profession today.

Similarly, starting nursing at the University of Nairobi in 1968 required unflinching determination and courage. It took many years of acrimony and protracted argument on the need to advance nursing education in Kenya. There were those in academia and the ministries of Health and Education who strongly believed there was no need for nurses to get higher education. According to them, such elevated education would be irrelevant given that nurses' receive instructions from doctors! However that reasoning was later weakened by the stand taken by WHO, UNICEF and other world bodies that health services in a country were largely dependent on the quality of nursing care. The international health bodies such as ICN and WHO supported the Ministry of Health with the necessary resources for the commencement of nursing education at the University of Nairobi.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kenya currently celebrates nursing education that has reached the highest levels. Nurses are trained at PhD and post doctoral levels, a level of education that aims to enhance competence,

promote progressive education and lifelong learning, leading to the production of practitioners who can provide quality care to communities. This level of learning would qualify nurses to sit at the highest policy making tables of all health matters including international health forums. Opportunities at global level for nurses equipped with higher learning are vast and will remain so in the future.

As nurses continue to acquire higher education, they need to pay special attention to the changing global environment especially in areas of information technology and artificial intelligence.

- Information Technology

Patients and general populations have access to large amounts of information more so than any other time in history. For instance the Google search engine has a mega bank of all information one could think of. Google has also created information tools for self diagnosis, possible medications in both conventional and alternative medicine. And am sure many of you have had to battle with the diagnosis from Dr. Google with your patients. It is possible also to find the best institutions for various diseases and health conditions all over the world.

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI is a disrupter likely to change the manner in which we approach the health profession. AI shall improve analytics, accelerate accuracy, reduce fraud, and in health applications achieve security, and operational excellence. But as far as nursing is concerned, AI is likely to create a challenge and this is seen best in Japan where they have already created a prototype of humanized robots. This robotic nurse is fashioned to mimic human mannerisms including singing to the patients. Robots are already in use in the manufacturing industry, in the military especially in the development of drones.

- Recognition of Nursing as a profession

The important role nurses play is indisputable, they are by far the largest force in the provision of health care in the nation from the highest level to the grassroots. However, for a long time nurses in Kenya have been neglected, their pay and terms of service leaves a lot to be desired. The challenge for both National and County governments' is the appointment of qualified nurses in positions of leadership. Additionally nurses should push for legislation which allows for liberal nursing practices.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this century there will be countless developments, innovations and challenges. Conventional practices in medicine will not be spared either. I hold the view that nurses of the 21st century must endeavor to be multi-skilled and ready to undertake research in nursing and implementation of science. Nurses should be prepared as consultants to guide care at the bedside.

No matter how technically advanced our field gets, patients will always need the human touch; the specialized healing hands of nurses. The role of a nurse cannot be overemphasized, patients need to hear our voices lifting their broken spirits; a Nurse is the most faithful advocate for patients. But despite these changes, there are human traits that won't change, in as much as they are diminishing fast, supply and demand will certainly put a very high premium to these human attributes.

As I conclude, being a nurse is a noble and honorable profession, and it is a true honor and pleasure to speak before you during this auspicious occasion as we mark 50 years in Kenya at university level. When I begun this journey, I always believed one day we would be a fraternity of great worth and I am extremely pleased at how far we have come. This is not to say it has not been without its hardships but it has been a worthy challenge.

We must always remember, as nurses we have the opportunity to heal the mind, body and soul of our patients, their families and ourselves. Our ultimate goal should be to approach nursing care in holistic manner. They may forget your name but they will never forget how you made them feel!

Let me take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous 2019.

Thank You and God Bless

Dr. Muringo Kiereini MBS, EBS