

Loss of healthcare workers unacceptable, says Taiwan nursing chief at QF Speaker Series



President of the Taiwan Nurses Association shares lessons the world can learn from the current pandemic at QF/WISH webinar

With millions being infected and thousands dying in the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that important lessons from this global emergency are learnt at international, national, healthcare and individual levels, Dr. Hsiu-Hung Wang, President of the Taiwan Nurses Association, said.

Dr. Wang, speaking at Qatar Foundation's recently held Education City Speaker Series, held in collaboration with the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH), shared critical learnings from how her country, Taiwan, is dealing with the pandemic in a way that has received high praise internationally.

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Dr. Hsiu-Hung Wang

"At the international level, countries must collaborate to learn and share information and experience to contain the pandemic. For example, Taiwan is cooperating with multiple countries on testing, vaccine development, and related medications," she said.

Dr. Wang also noted that government leaders must take a proactive and comprehensive perspective to make the best judgements, take the right decisions, provide timely responses, deliver clear information and messages, and manage effective communications and measures.



Dr. Hsiu-Hung Wang, President of the Taiwan Nurses Association.

“Effective communication and transparent information helps maximize public awareness and prevent panic. The Taiwan government continues to hold daily press conferences to provide the most-current information on COVID-19.”

Taiwan has had one of the best responses to the pandemic despite it having been declared early this year as one of the most at-risk areas due to its proximity to mainland China. Having learned valuable lessons from its previous experience with the SARS epidemic, with which it was particularly hard hit, Taiwan was able to move quickly when the novel virus first began to spread across the world.

A proactive approach to preparedness and deployment of domestic manufacturers to increase surgical mask protection meant Taiwan was not only able to cover its own demands but also donate additional supplies to frontline healthcare workers in countries that have been seriously hit by COVID-19, such as the US and European countries, including Spain and Italy, with future donations expected to focus on Africa and South Asian countries.

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Dr. Hsiu-Hung Wang

“I believe Taiwan’s health-system leaders will continue to prioritize providing appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE), safe staffing, mental support, and a resilient program. Without sufficient PPE, staffing, and sufficient rest, nurses cannot provide their best nursing services.”

However, Dr. Wang expressed her concern at the number of healthcare workers around the world facing high personal health risks due to inadequate PPE, and underlined the importance of the state in supporting frontline healthcare workers as they “provide direct care to the public and so require appropriate PPE and training. And any loss of healthcare workers due to a lack of preparedness is unacceptable.”



Like Taiwan, Qatar is showing its preparedness in tackling the pandemic. Less than a week after the classification of COVID-19 as a notifiable infectious disease, the Central Epidemic Command Center, which functions similarly to Qatar's Supreme Committee for Crisis Management, was established to cope with the pandemic. Thereafter, clear policies and transparent information on issues such as border controls, quarantine policy, mask policy, and social distancing rules have been announced and communicated through frequent press conferences.

"We know every country has its own context and culture as well as different experiences, resources, and emergency preparedness strategies for coping with the virus. And no one knows when the current pandemic will be contained; we all face an unseen enemy. But we share the same planet and none of us is above or immune from this global health emergency."