

The 2010 International Year of the Nurse Initiative

Celebrating nursing's value and promoting better health worldwide.

Florence Nightingale died a century ago at age 90. A social and environmental activist and a nurse, she influenced the leaders of many nations in her efforts to improve the health, education, and well-being of their citizens. She brought significant sanitation reforms to military and civilian hospitals during and after the Crimean War. She also sought to change unsafe and unsanitary community conditions affecting health. She was a best-selling author, a journalist, and an avid networker. All of these activities were a part of what she called "health nursing."

One wonders how Florence Nightingale would tackle today's health care problems. How would she address the effects of climate change on our health? What would she do to make health care a priority for everyone?

These questions, and our contemplation of their answers, led to the creation of a global initiative called the 2010 International Year of the Nurse, which commemorates the centennial of Nightingale's death and honors the voices, values, and wisdom of the more than 15 million nurses around the world. Nursing's honor society, Sigma Theta Tau International, the Nightingale Initiative for Global Health, and the Florence Nightingale Museum in London launched this public awareness initiative to focus attention on the contributions of nurses and their continued efforts to improve worldwide health over the course of this year.

Nurses are invited to submit photos and stories reflecting their



Left to right: Barbara Dossey, Cynda H. Rushton, and Deva-Marie Beck.

work to the 2010 International Year of the Nurse Web site (www.2010iynurse.net), and are encouraged to speak to the public and their elected officials about improving global health. We also hope that nurses will host and attend events throughout the year, such as fundraisers, workshops, and awards ceremonies, that celebrate Nightingale and the work of contemporary nurses.

Nurses' assistance is especially needed to help meet the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, which aim to improve the lives of all people, particularly the poorest. Defined in 2000, three of these goals are of particular concern to nurses—those that seek to reduce child mortality rates, improve maternal health, and combat HIV and AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. The United Nations hopes to meet these goals by 2015, but so far not enough progress has been made. A greater reduction in the number of women dying in childbirth each year (an estimated half a million worldwide) is necessary, and infant mortality rates are still unacceptably high.

The 2010 International Year of the Nurse initiative was created to encourage today's nurses to follow in Nightingale's footsteps—acting, as she did, as scientists, humanitarians, environmentalists, policymakers, social activists, communicators, facilitators, and caregivers of the global population. During this year and long after, we must show the world the value of nursing and actively address today's health challenges, influencing public opinion and garnering support to improve worldwide health.

To learn more, visit www.nightingaledeclaration.net. ▼

Deva-Marie Beck, Barbara Dossey, and Cynda H. Rushton are international codirectors of the Nightingale Initiative for Global Health, based in Washington, DC, and Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Dossey is also director of Holistic Nursing Consultants in Santa Fe, NM, and on the board of the Samueli Institute in Alexandria, VA. Rushton is also an associate professor of nursing and pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing, Baltimore, MD, where she is on the faculty of the Berman Institute of Bioethics and program director of Harriet Lane Compassionate Care. Contact author: Deva-Marie Beck, devamarie@earthlink.net.