

CARTE

BLANCHE



THREE UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS UNITE IN DEMANDING A VALORISATION OF THE HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONS

A valorisation of healthcare staff is quite simply essential. This will result from policy changes and greater recognition on the part of all concerned

Brussels, 31 January 2023 – Faced with the strike by public sector workers on 31 January and the directly related issues for public health and society, the French-speaking university hospitals (Brussels University Hospital) (H.U.B), the Saint-Luc University Hospital and the Liège University Hospital) are supporting the unions.

Even if the word is fortunately no longer making the headlines, our hospital system is still suffering from the effects of Copvid-19 and nursing and non-nursing staff are continuing to act every day in a remarkable way in the interests of patients. Action that was very much in the spotlight back in March 2020 and that has since tended to be forgotten. Yet the situation remains difficult on the ground. Apart from the pandemic, the ageing population and the increase in chronic diseases, accompanied by the inevitably more intensive and more complex care, are placing an increasing burden on our healthcare system. With each new health crisis (such as the recent flu and bronchitis epidemic) the system finds itself too often under maximum pressure, despite the solidarity between healthcare staff.

It would be dangerous to accept as normal the reality of a staff shortage that results in many beds being closed. Alas, there is no denying that working conditions are difficult and that pressure is growing for all concerned. The continuing reduction in hospitalisation days and increase in day hospitalisation operations are in most cases seen as a positive development. However, these trends also place an added burden on nursing staff, especially through the increased rate of new hospital admissions. At the same time, human contact between patients and nurses, so essential to the true meaning of the profession and at the origin of a humane care, is decreasing in parallel.

Then there is the IFC [Job Classification] reform which, despite the intention of greater recognition for nurses, is leading to tensions and frustration on the ground. In fact the reform fails to sufficiently recognise a number of nursing categories, starting with those who work in hospitalisation units or those specialised in complex care units. In addition to the financial aspects, these situations are rightly seen as non-recognition of expertise and of a commitment to patients that is vital to their needs.

The nursing profession is an essential profession and a genuine vocation for many of our colleagues. The hospital sector, a social actor at the heart of every health crisis, has stepped up to face every crisis situation. For this to continue we wish with all our hearts for these professions of such importance and meaning to continue to inspire vocations. Nursing staff play a more than essential role within our university hospitals in which we combine care with research and teaching so as to offer patients the most innovative treatment and to transmit knowledge to future generations. The wealth of discoveries and innovations and the quality of care exist only by virtue of this teamwork between the medical staff and the care staff as a whole.

Working at a university hospital should be one of the most wonderful professions in the world. One that provides the opportunity to be a health actor and to participate actively in the sharing of knowledge and to be present in a scientific and progressive environment dedicated to the highest quality care. Our combat is for the healthcare professions to regain the attractiveness they deserve and that society needs. This is why we have decided to support the trade union organisations on this day of protests.

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If the humanism of care is not to become a pious wish it is vital to invest more in improving working conditions, especially by increasing the number of nurses in care units and recognising the specific expertise this requires on their part. We must never forget that it is this collective commitment on the part of nursing staff that enables Belgium to have a healthcare system that is one of our national treasures. Maintaining this exceptional strength means the collective recognition of nurses who, unfortunately, are increasingly having to be subject to a certain aggressiveness on the part of patients or their loved ones.

If collectively, at the political level but also as citizens, we do not make increased recognition for nursing staff an absolute priority we will not be able to retain our present teams and will fail to convince new generations to commit to the care professions that we all know are so vitally essential.

The Brussels University Hospital (H.U.B) - consisting of the Erasmus Hospital, the Jules Bordet Institute and the Children's Hospital -, the Saint-Luc University Hospital and Liège University Hospital all support the demands of the staff and trade unions as they reflect the general interest. For our hospitals to function optimally and best fulfil their missions of care, research and teaching in an evolving context we support the need for change at the political level for a valorisation of the healthcare professions. One that will render them more attractive and that, more globally, will support the organisation and functioning of our health system.