



February 6, 2011

*OPEN LETTER FROM THE CNA PRESIDENT*

Dear colleagues:

**International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation**

Today marks International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). According to the World Health Organization, between 100 and 140 million girls and women have undergone some form of female genital mutilation. And these numbers are growing, with three million more girls at risk each year.

There is, however, some encouraging news. A new UNICEF report, *The Dynamics of Social Change: Towards the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Five African Countries*, highlights how African communities are working to end FGM/C. The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) welcomes this report and joins nurses worldwide in supporting efforts to improve health policies, programming and services for girls and women who have undergone FGM/C.

FGM/C is painful and traumatic. It is usually carried out on girls from infancy to 15 years of age. There is no therapeutic benefit to FGM/C. In fact, it is a violation of the girls' human rights and leads to serious health problems, including bleeding, problems urinating and complications in childbirth.

There is no single answer to ending this harmful practice and, as the UNICEF report rightly points out, changing centuries-old social norms is a complex process that takes time. Putting an end to FGM/C will take a multi-pronged approach involving community leadership and solidarity, legislative reform, and social networking, including by health-care practitioners.

CNA supports the International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation and calls for an end to this harmful practice.

Sincerely,

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President