



## Letter to editor

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

We want to thank Professor McMillan for her response (McMillan, 2022) to our Editorial 'We're on mute! Exclusion of nurses' voices in national decision and responses to COVID-19: An international perspective' in *Journal of Advanced Nursing* (Rasmussen et al., 2022).

We are pleased that the editorial which outlined our view of the importance of recognizing the work of nurses and midwives especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and having their voices heard resonated with Professor McMillan. The pandemic has without doubt been an extremely testing and challenging time for senior nursing leaders throughout the world. We thank her for sharing her experiences. We are reassured to hear that as Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer in Australia you played an important role in key advisory committees during the pandemic including co-chairing Australia's Infection Prevention and Control Expert Group, the Nursing and Midwifery Strategic Reference Group, the National Nursing and Midwifery Education Advisory Committee and her media appearances.

We completely agree that the contribution of nurses to public discussion and decision making, particularly at a government level, is of the utmost importance. Many reported the overwhelming powerlessness they felt to influence the clinical environment and their perceptions of being ignored and silenced by managers and leaders. Therefore, the amplification of the nursing voice at national levels was arguably even more important to nurses working through the pandemic. If we as academics and professors of nursing undertaking research with nurses during the pandemic were unaware of the involvement of senior nurse leaders in high-level committees which influenced national responses to the pandemic, then it is likely nurses working clinically were also unaware.

The International Council of Nurses recently surveyed its 130-member National Nursing Associations (NNAs) during the pandemic (International Council of Nurses, 2021). Less than half reported that their government chief nurses had been involved in national health decision-making about COVID-19 and similarly less than half of infection, prevention and control nurses or senior nurses had been involved in government decision-making (International Council of Nurses, 2021). This involvement is less than other health professionals (Anders, 2021; Morone et al., 2022), particularly members of the medical profession, public health experts and academics and reinforces our assertion that the voice of nursing was muted or significantly lowered in many national contexts.

Our hope was for our editorial to generate international discussion about the important role and visibility of nurses and their contribution especially during adverse events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. We thank Professor McMillan for her response and important contribution to this discussion.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

*Conceptualization:* Bodil Rasmussen, Bridie Kent, Jill Maben, Ruth Harris, Sara Holton, Janet E. Anderson. *Writing original draft:* Bodil Rasmussen. *Writing: review and editing:* All authors. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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