



Nurses Finding the Voice: Nursing Advocacy Roles and Lessons from the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Modern healthcare is built on nursing advocacy, and nurses perform crucial roles as advocates in many different contexts.

This brief communication paper examines the varied nature of nursing advocacy and its importance in the provision of healthcare.

Nurses are primary caregivers and in a unique position to uphold patients' rights and needs while promoting patient-centered care. To ensure that patients' voices are heard and appreciated, they act as communicators, bridging gaps between patients and healthcare teams. To sum up, nurses play an advocacy role that is revolutionary for the healthcare system as well as vital. Not only have nurses found their voices, but they have also used them to advocate for changes in the healthcare system and to fight for the rights and welfare of patients.

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المرضات يجدن الصوت: أدوار الدفاع عن التمريض والدروس المستفادة من الوباء

المستخلص

الرعاية الصحية الحديثة مبنية على الدفاع عن التمريض، ويؤدي الممرضون أدوارًا حاسمة كمدافعين في العديد من السياقات المختلفة.

تتناول ورقة الاتصال الموجزة هذه الطبيعة المتنوعة للدفاع عن التمريض وأهميته في توفير الرعاية الصحية. الممرضون هم مقدمو الرعاية الأساسيون ويتمتعون بوضع فريد لدعم حقوق المرضى واحتياجاتهم مع تعزيز الرعاية التي تركز على المريض. ولضمان سماع أصوات المرضى وتقديرها، فإنهم يعملون كجهات اتصال، وسد الفجوات بين المرضى وفرق الرعاية الصحية. باختصار، تلعب الممرضات دورًا ثوريًا في نظام الرعاية الصحية كما أنه يلعب دورًا حيويًا. لم يجد الممرضون أصواتهم فحسب، بل استخدموها أيضًا للدفاع عن التغييرات في نظام الرعاية الصحية والنضال من أجل حقوق ورفاهية المرضى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مناصرة التمريض، الجائحة، التمريض، السياسة الصحية، مناصرة المرضى

Introduction

An advocate is defined as a person who represents the interests, a course of action, or a proposition of another person ⁽¹⁾. Advocacy is a relatively recent idea in nursing ⁽²⁾. Advocacy in the nursing profession refers to the preservation of human dignity, the promotion of patient equity, and the provision of relief from suffering. It's also about ensuring that people have the freedom to make their own health decisions ⁽³⁾. Advocacy is an important part of providing high-quality, patient-centered care. A previous study suggested that the idea of nursing advocacy highlights three crucial qualities: respecting patients' freedom to make decisions for themselves; educating and empowering patients to make those decisions and to speak out for the patient, family, and healthcare staff so that their needs and wants come first ⁽²⁾. Nurses advocate for and on behalf of patients and families by ensuring that they make informed health care decisions, assisting them in navigating an increasingly complex health care system, ensuring that complex terminology is easily understood, and assisting patients and families in making ethical care decisions ⁽⁴⁾. Nurses are well-positioned to be advocates since they have the most direct contact with patients and their

families. In addition to being highly regarded information sources, nurses are also community leaders who may bring health-related issues up in open forums ⁽⁴⁾. One of the most important aspects of nursing is the capacity to successfully advocate for patients. Despite these circumstances, it was difficult for nurses to accomplish this additional task of advocacy ⁽²⁾. This brief communication examines the advocacy roles that nurses play and what may be done to encourage advocacy responsiveness throughout the nursing profession.

Nursing advocacy during the pandemic: The Barriers and Challenges

The position of advocate has been regarded as being significant within the nursing profession, despite the fact that there are arguments against nurses taking on such a role ⁽⁵⁾. When the COVID-19 pandemic was at its worst and there were severe restrictions making it impossible for family members to visit patients, nurses played a crucial role in advocating for patient rights, through nurses, the patients are connected to the outside world. Additionally, nurses serve as a point of contact between the patient and the rest of the healthcare team and nurses have never had a greater need to advocate for their patients ⁽⁶⁾.

The COVID -19 pandemic has brought to light a number of flaws in the healthcare delivery systems ⁽⁷⁾. For instance, the public health response to this pandemic has been insufficient because of the lack of testing and contact tracing, resulting in overworked hospitals and healthcare personnel who are also contending with a scarcity of personal protective equipment (PPE) ⁽⁷⁾. While orders to stay at home for a long time are necessary to stop the spread of disease, nurses can significantly affect access to care, including specialty care and behavioral health services. Nurses have been at the forefront of caring for COVID-19 patients, as well as illness prevention, education, and other preventative health initiatives ⁽⁶⁾. The pandemic had a big impact on the healthcare field, changing the workforce, highlighting health inequalities, and creating new options for care delivery ⁽⁶⁾. Nurses must go past the pandemic and into its aftermath and decide how nursing, as the most trusted profession in the world, can help address the long-standing societal health issues through advocacy highlighted by the pandemic now, more than ever. Nurses must advocate and assist in addressing the ways in which socioeconomic injustices contribute to disparities in health outcomes ⁽⁷⁾. According to previous study, there is a lack of cooperation between the medical staff, those receiving care, and the hospital⁽⁸⁾. This lack of cooperation can be attributed to the hospital's environment at work, interpersonal relationships, patients' families, and religious and cultural beliefs, as well as the hospital itself ⁽⁸⁾. Lack of advocacy resulted in more problems, deaths, and negative effects such as increased burden on the medical center and observed burnout among nursing professionals⁽⁹⁾. Nurses, on the other hand, will only be able to reach their full potential if governments can recognize what they must do and take the long-term measures required to achieve the tremendous rise in the nursing workforce that is urgently required ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Nurses advocating for the preferred future

COVID-19 has demonstrated the significance of educating current and future nurses to address health outcomes at a population level, despite the fact that nursing education is primarily focused on providing acute care in hospital settings ⁽⁴⁾. Policy makers in the academe and practice need to prepare a nursing workforce that is educated to deliver culturally relevant care and address structural determinants of health since systematic bias plays a big role in perpetuating these disparities. Nurses advocate for advocacy roles at the point of care as well as specific advocacy roles as nurse managers and educators. ⁽¹¹⁾. Nurses can self-advocate for professional growth and satisfaction or individually advocate for common concerns influencing their role in patient care, Nurses must band together to influence the structures, powers, and support systems in place in order to provide safe and effective care to our patients ⁽¹²⁾. Life's uncertainty compels nurses to exercise their privilege, right, and ethical responsibility to advocate for positive change. While individual advocacy can take place at the bedside, nurses are encouraged to broaden their influence to include policy. Nurses must be prepared to act as policy advocates in order to accomplish these findings suggest, nurses are more likely to advocate if they have confident speaking skills when addressing a problem, understand their organizations' daily policy activity, and understand how policy is created ⁽¹³⁻¹⁴⁾. One of the most crucial lessons nurse advocates have discovered is the power of unity. Planning, having a plan in place, and being committed to locating the necessary resources are all necessary in addition to the team approach ⁽¹⁴⁾. Through health advocacy, nurses put their empathy, moral principles, assertiveness, and persistence to use as they deal with their own anxiety, exhaustion, frustrations, and stress in a setting where there

may be conflict between team members, a lack of financial resources, outdated infrastructure, and the continued use of outdated organizational management and health care practices, all of which put the safety of their work at risk.

Recommendations

Effective nursing advocacy not only promotes patient outcomes but also the standard of care for all patients. Here are some recommendations to help nurses succeed in their responsibilities as advocates:

1. **Embrace Ongoing Education:** To stay current on healthcare policies, rules, and ethical guidelines, nurses must engage in ongoing learning. Nurses should spend resources on professional development and keep up with developments that affect their field. Their advocacy efforts will be strengthened by this information.

2. **Develop Effective Communication Skills:** Effective communication with patients, families, healthcare professionals, and legislators is a key component of advocacy. To effectively express their wants and concerns, nurses should practice their communication skills, which include active listening, empathy, and assertiveness.

3. **Foster Collaborative Relationships:** Effective advocacy requires forming strong relationships with coworkers, medical professionals, and administrators. To advance patient-centered care and fight for required reforms in the healthcare system, nurses should actively participate in interdisciplinary teamwork.

4. **Keep Current on Ethical Issues:** Nursing professionals frequently run into moral binds in their work. When presented with circumstances that jeopardize the safety of patients or their own professional integrity, they should be well-versed in ethical concepts

and ready to fight for the appropriate course of action.

5. **Knowledge of Healthcare Policies:** It's crucial to have a complete awareness of healthcare policies at the local, state, and federal levels. Discussions about healthcare policy should involve nurses; they should also promote measures that enhance patient safety and high-quality care.

6. **Join Professional Organizations:** Nursing associations and organizations can give nurses access to beneficial resources and a forum for advocacy. These organizations frequently present chances to take part in legislative activities, contribute to policy discussions, and connect with other like-minded individuals.

7. **Promote Patient Education:** A key responsibility of nurses is to promote patient education. Patients and their families should be made aware of their healthcare alternatives, rights, and obligations by nurses. Patients who are knowledgeable are better able to make choices and advocate for themselves.

8. **Self-Advocacy:** Nurses must also speak up for themselves in order to protect their own interests and advance their careers. They ought to be adamant about access to chances for professional development, fair compensation, and workplace safety

9. **Participate in Advocacy Training:** To improve advocacy abilities, think about taking part in workshops and training programs in advocacy. These classes can offer useful advice on how to effectively advocate in a range of healthcare settings. Lastly,

10. **Peer support and mentoring:** Veteran nurses can provide rookie staff members with advocacy, advice, and perspective. Peer support groups can give nurses a forum to talk about problems with advocacy and get assistance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, nurses play an advocacy role that is not only essential but also transformational for the healthcare system. In addition to finding their voices, nurses have utilized them to fight for the rights and welfare of patients and promote reforms in the healthcare system. The vital contributions of nurses as advocates are best exemplified by their unwavering commitment to fighting for better patient care, healthcare regulations, and the general improvement of society. Nurses will likely be at the forefront of healthcare advocacy as they continue to change and adapt in this dynamic sector, making sure that the voices of those they serve are heard and acknowledged.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declares no conflict of interest

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