Nursing Advocacy

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 Nursing advocacy is a very important role of nurses in healthcare. An advocate is defined as one that pleads, defends, or supports a cause or interest of another. Functioning in the role of advocate requires the nurse to perform many different roles such as communicator, liaison, educator, interpreter, and caregiver. While taking care of patients, providing them with optimal care, and being the patient advocate is an important function of nursing, it is also important for nurses to advocate for the nursing profession as well. “When it comes to patient care, nurses consistently play the role of advocate as they support each patient’s emotional well-being, contribute to the healing process and speak on their patients’ behalf. Nurses can also put their advocacy skills to work in advocating for each other and for the nursing profession as a whole (Krishchke, n.d.)”. It is vital for nurses utilize their advocacy skills to address concerns in the workplace, advocate for the nursing profession, and to promote a positive work environment (Davoodvand, Abbaszadeh, & Ahmadi, 2016).

 Why should nurses advocate? The American Nurses Association believes that advocacy is the pillar of nursing. It is instinctive for nursing to advocate for their patients, in their workplaces, and in their communities; but legislative and political advocacy is no less important to advancing the profession and patient care (Tomajan, 2012). Nurses provide essential services to clients, have the most interpersonal contact with patients, and interact closely with healthcare consumers across a wide range of social, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. This allows nurses to have a first-hand knowledge of what is needed in healthcare. Who better to be the voice of the nursing profession than the nurses who work in the profession and know what is needed for the advancement of the profession?

 The American Nurse Association Code of Ethics outlines a variety of advocacy skills and activities that form the foundation of the advocacy role of the professional nurse. Nurses are expected to demonstrate these skills and participate in these activities. “The skills include service to the profession through teaching, mentoring, peer review, involvement in professional associations, community service, and knowledge development/dissemination (Tomajan, 2012)”. To be an effective nurse advocate, a nurse must also possess problem solving ability, effective communication, influence, and the ability to collaborate with others to reach a common goal. Effective advocacy improves the quality of patient care and enriches the nursing profession (Davoodvand et al., 2016).

 There are many organizations that advocate on behalf of nurses. The American Nurses Association (ANA), National Council State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), and National League of Nursing (NLN) advocate on behalf of nurses to ensure that the nurses voice is represented during policy discussions. The new policies and policy changes affect healthcare delivery, nursing workforce development, to ensure that nursing students have funding to attend nursing school, to ensure that nurses are prepared and properly equipped to meet the demands of providing healthcare in today’s ever changing and challenging healthcare environment (Phillips, 2017). It is important for nurses and student nurses to be involved in and stay abreast on the current issues, not only locally, but also on the state and federal level. It is important for nurses to work with policy makers to give vital insight of what is needed in healthcare for nurses and patient care.

 In conclusion, although it is instinctive for nurses to advocate for their patients, it is very important for nurses to advocate for their profession as well. It is expected that nurses participate in peer reviews, mentoring, and other activities to help enrich and improve the nursing profession. There are many professional nursing organizations that advocate for nurses and the nursing profession, but nurses are equipped with many skills that allow them to be apart of the change that is being advocated for in the nursing profession. All nurses should educate themselves and be effective advocates!

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