Nursing Advocacy

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When a registered nurse begins a career in the medical field they become an essential part of a patient’s life. As a nurse, we are to use the position earned to support and protect our patients as well as speak for the patient’s rights while in our care. Nurses are extremely skilled and trained to communicate and provide quality care to patients. Many patients do not understand the measures that will be taken while they are receiving treatment, so it is crucial for a nurse to be an effective communicator. The nurse must obtain the patient’s trust, show them that they are important, and their needs will be met while in the nurse’s care. It is the nurse’s job to educate patients about their care, provide treatment, and perform procedures as prescribed by the physician. It is also the nurse’s responsibility to advocate for the patient’s safety while in the health care setting. The nurse will be the professional that is closest to the patient and their family, so they are undeniably best suited as an advocate of patient rights.

 The number one way the nurse can be an effective advocate for a patient is through effective communication. The nurse must listen, be assertive, and truly understand the patients wants and needs. Listening is a huge component of advocacy. Active listening benefits not only the patient but the nurse and can result in the delivery of culturally competent care to the diverse patient. (Davidhizar, 2014) Many times, people will listen to respond instead of truly listening to what the patient is saying. They must also know and understand the patient’s medical background. If there are barriers in communication, it is the nurse’s responsibility to combat those barriers so that quality and safe care can be provided to the patient. The nurse uses clear and open communication with the patient, the patient’s family, and the health care team. There must be respect when communicating and trustworthiness within the network of care because the patient will encounter not only the nurse, but many other people who play an important role in providing quality care for the patient.

 When a patient is receiving care in a health care setting, is it common for them to feel anxious and overwhelmed. Patients may be confused about procedures or treatments taking place, or even frightened by the unknown. A nurse is responsible for communicating to the patient and their families to address any concerns the patient may have while remaining in the nurse’s care. A nurse will provide physical and emotional support for patients and will often be required to speak for patients who have dissimilar cultural or ethical belief systems than their own. The American Nursing Associations Code of Ethics states that “the nurse practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and uniqueness of every individual, unrestricted by considerations of social or economic status, personal attributes, or the nature of health problems.” (American Nurses Association, 2015.)

 Lastly, the nurse will be an advocate for a patient by providing safety in all aspects of patient care. In certain situations, a patient may not understand how to express their wants and desires when it comes to their treatment, so it becomes the nurse’s responsibility to speak for the patient regarding the plan of care. In doing this, the nurse should understand that they are speaking for the patient’s wishes and not their own or the patient’s family. This could take place when the patient does not want resuscitation measures taken and the family is against their wishes. It can also happen if other nurses have labeled a patient as troublesome and dismisses their needs, instead of providing quality care. Another way advocacy for the patient can take place is when a nurse is uncomfortable performing a skill and needs a more experienced nurse to assist. Although a nurse will take risks as a patient advocate, the patient’s health and safety is the focus of the duty of the nurse. The nurse will provide care that is in the best interest of the patient while protecting the patient from harm.

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