



Nurse's Become Patient Advocate

Dr. Meeta Dutta Goyal^{1*} Mr. Himanshu Goyal²

1. PhD Nursing, Principal, SAGE, College of Nursing, Bhopal.
2. M.Sc. Nursing, Asst. Nursing Superintendent, Kamla Nehru Hospital, Bhopal.

*Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

In the realm of patient advocacy, there exists a gap between the ideal concept and the practical implementation. The concept of representing patients in an optimal manner clashes with the realities faced in the healthcare system. To truly promote nurses as effective patient advocates, a comprehensive and precise understanding of this disconnect is essential. Recognizing the potential impact of nurses in improving lives globally, the American Nursing Association designated 2018 as the Year of Advocacy. During this period, the organization aimed to raise awareness about the significant role nurses play in influencing and effecting change within the healthcare system of the country. In today's world, rapid advancements in medical sciences and technology have resulted in the development of innovative treatment techniques and alterations in healthcare regulations. While these changes bring promise, patients in India encounter challenges in accessing vital health-related information and making informed decisions concerning their rights and protection. The rise in corporate medical facilities, healthcare-related challenges, research trials, and undue media attention exacerbates these difficulties, necessitating the presence of a patient advocate.

To bridge the divide between the ideal and reality, a thorough exploration of patient representation is required. Nurses, as front-line healthcare providers, can become powerful advocates for patients, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs addressed. This role involves acting as a liaison between patients and the healthcare system, guiding and supporting them throughout their healthcare journey. Effective patient advocacy empowers patients to make informed decisions about their treatment options and actively participate in their healthcare planning. By understanding patients' unique needs and concerns, nurses can provide personalized care, enhance patient satisfaction, and ultimately improve health outcomes.

In conclusion, the concept of patient representation faces challenges when translated into practice. However, nurses possess the potential to bridge this gap and become powerful patient advocates. The Year of Advocacy serves as a reminder of the significance of nurses' role in influencing positive changes within the healthcare system, leading to better patient care and a healthier society.

INTRODUCTION

The rights and protection of patients are the focus of several organizations in India, including regulatory authorities, scientific review boards, ethical committees, NGOs, etc. However, these organizations fall short of meeting the needs of patients' rights in general. To strengthen the openness and credibility of the Indian healthcare system, it is necessary to develop a distinct group of individuals who conduct patient advocacy, or simply, a patients advocacy organization. From the beginning of planning rather than the troubleshooting stage, this group will give particular consideration to patient care and the protection of rights. Nurses are in the greatest position to represent patients because of the extended time spent with patients, the opportunity to develop relationships, and the responsibility to provide care without causing damage. Since the International Council of Nurses (ICN) included this idea in its Professional Codes in the 1970s, advocacy has been used. Nurses can improve the safety, self-control, and overall standard of life of patients while preserving their values, benefits, and autonomy. Additionally, nurses will have more authority, professional standing, and work satisfaction if they effectively advocate for patients. Due to their fragility, hospitalized patients have little influence over their health care and are more at risk for a variety of dangers, including medical mistakes, the wrongdoings or carelessness of the medical staff, and improper medical procedures or nursing care.

The following characteristics of patient advocacy are based on a large number of studies: client empowerment, information, value and respect, protection, continuity of treatment, follow-up, patient empathy, counseling, retaliating shielding, and whistleblowing.

According to Davoodvand et al., advocacy has two characteristics: "empathy with patients" (which includes understanding, feeling sympathetic toward, and being close to the patient) and "protecting patients" (which includes patient care, prioritizing patients' health, committing to the completion of taking care process, and protecting patients' rights).

The philosophy of nursing, according to which what nurses do is the assistance provided to a person to advance his or her own mental health as seen by that person, is the foundation for nurse advocacy. It is a practice ethic.

Patient rights, health, as well as security are all protected by nurse advocates via the utilization of their trusted positions. They collaborate with medical professionals, nursing organizations, nurse leaders, health administrators, and legislators to guarantee the best possible patient care for both people and their families.

In addition to many other crucial concerns, nurse advocates speak up on front of patients to advance dignity, equality, liberty, & civil rights. A fundamental responsibility of licensed practical nurses, leaders in nursing, nurse practitioners, nurse trainers, and other types of healthcare professionals is to address each patient's desire to be heard and understood.

What is Advocacy in Nursing?

By "pleading or arguing towards favor of something," advocacy is defined as a collection of acts with the primary goal of raising awareness in order to influence choices about a topic or policy in a specified direction. Advocacy has two meanings that are connected. For example, "public sympathy for or recommendation of an individual cause or policy." The second definition is "The practice of being a legal advocate."

To be an advocate in the nursing field is to uphold human dignity, advance patient equity, and end suffering. Additionally, the right of patients to make choices about their own medical care must be upheld.

Nurse advocates work to make sure that policies, rules, and services are centered on satisfying the needs of patients while maintaining their safety. Nurse advocates provide as a point of contact for patients, their doctors, and medical institutions. Nurses are knowledgeable medical professionals who can guide people through the convoluted healthcare system. A nurse advocate may speak with the physician on a patient's behalf, for example, if they don't agree with the treatment plan. Nurse advocates may make sure that physicians are offering their patients the most affordable treatment alternatives.

Nursing advocacy tactics aid in the advancement of moral causes, provide assistance to individuals or organizations that may want it, and address healthcare issues. A nurse who stands up for their patients could defend their legal rights, explain their illnesses and treatments to them, or take a variety of additional activities to promote their health and safety.

Important Strategies of Nursing Advocacy

Advocacy strategies in nursing can offer a variety of benefits to patients, nurses and communities, such as:

1. Treating patients with respect
2. Honoring the patient's wishes
3. Protecting a patient's rights
4. Keeping patient's safe
5. Helping communities

Benefits of Nurse Advocacy

Here are a few ways nurse advocacy has a positive impact:

Benefits for Patients

In circumstances or contexts where they may otherwise be overlooked or dismissed, nurses act as patient advocates. Nurse advocates may simplify complex information like diagnosis, medications, or treatment plans since many individuals are not acquainted with the medical jargon that physicians employ. To make sure someone can assist with at-home care requirements, they collaborate with the patients' relatives or close friends.

Benefits for Nurses

Through their advocacy, nurses help to create workplaces with greater requirements, better rules, and patient-centered policies. Nurses may provide treatment with a lower risk of injuring their patients in safer medical surroundings. Promoting safety improves the health of nurses and patients.

The battle to improve nurses' working conditions is known as nurse advocacy. Nurse advocacy shows that a hospital's personnel is concerned about the people it serves.

How to Become a Nurse Advocate

Here are 10 strategies to improve your nursing advocacy efforts and abilities:

1. Serve as a mediator in discussions between patients and doctors
2. Recommend to patients suitable resources.
3. Inform your patients.
4. Continue your education - There are several ways for nurses to stay current on innovations in nursing and medicine, including:
 - Participating at trade shows, seminars, lectures, and other types of networking events
 - Subscribing to newsletters and nursing publications that provide current journal article summaries.
 - Reading newsletters produced by your hospital, department, or clinic
 - Speaking with your coworkers about business news or nursing procedures.
 - Becoming a member of a regional or national organization for nurses.
5. Interact with the team as a whole.
6. Consult the patient's relatives
7. Advocate for judicial decisions or policy modifications - Nurses passionate about policy advocacy may want to think about techniques like:
 - Gaining deeper understanding of the legislative process
 - Participating in public discussions on healthcare
 - Giving evidence from a nurse or medical expert at government hearings on healthcare regulations.
 - Signing up for text alerts, bulletins, or emails from regional or nationwide healthcare advocacy organizations.
 - Collaborating with nearby schools to increase resources or access to healthcare.
 - Speaking with government representatives or organizations about potential healthcare policies.
 - Telling local decision-makers your own, intimate tales about your experiences as a nurse.
8. Speak out for yourself and promote nursing issues by using the following strategies:
 - Participating in nurse mentorships

- Attending committee or meeting meetings at work
 - Taking part in a professional nursing organization
9. Encourage patients to act as their own advocates - Assist in giving your patients the information, resources, and skills they need to advocate over themselves. There are several strategies for patients to strengthen their capacity to speak out for their healthcare needs, including:
- Requesting efficient and understandable communication
 - Using reliable sources to locate new physicians
 - Making their medical summary
10. Minimize errors

Tips for advocating as a Nurse

Here is some guidance on how nurses might put into practice successful lobbying tactics:

- Be aware of the rules and legislation
- Communicate effectively
- Have empathy for patients
- Be a leader
- Research ethics in nursing
- Practice self – care

For nurse practitioners, patient administrators, and nurse educators, the process of becoming a nurse's ally might appear differently. The majority of people start out by obtaining a bachelor's degree in healthcare, passing the test, and then becoming registered nurses with the state nurse's registration council.

Although a nurse may not have the official title of "nurse advocate," any registered nurse in India may include nursing advocacy into their everyday activities. Nursing advocacy is a vocation and a way of thinking, and pursuing it helps nurses provide clarity and solace to every patient they care for.

A Master of Arts in Nursing, for example, is an advanced degree that people should think about obtaining if they want to serve as nurse advocates in medical facilities. Family nurse practitioner, nurses teacher or nurse administrator are the most popular job choices for nursing students enrolled in MSN programs.

In India no specific course is run by Indian Nursing Council, but some countries have courses or training programme for nurse advocate.

Issues Nurse Advocacy

When seeking to effectively fight for their patients, nurses often encounter a number of obstacles, with the institutional level being the largest challenge. Depending on the workplace, some nurses who attempt to fulfill the patient advocate job encounter little to no assistance from administrators, doctors, or colleagues.

- Affordable Care Act
- Negative Healthcare Trends
- Self-Advocacy

Numerous research on the idea of patient advocacy are accessible, as was previously indicated. However, the majority of them simply looked at the idea from the nurses' point of view. Only a few research examined the idea of patient advocacy, but they did not document how it changed through time.

This idea may aid in the creation of managerial or educational theories, the creation of tools for assessing nurses' patient advocacy performance, the creation of plans to strengthen patient advocacy, and the enhancement of the security and caliber of nursing care throughout the community or healthcare system.

DISCUSSION

The paper discusses the importance of patient advocacy in the Indian healthcare system. It emphasizes the need for a distinct patients advocacy organization to safeguard patient rights and improve care quality. Nurses are identified as key advocates due to their close patient interactions. The characteristics of patient advocacy, such as client empowerment and protection, are highlighted. The philosophy of nursing, focusing on advancing patients' mental health and dignity, serves as the foundation for nurse advocacy. The paper also explains the role of nurse advocates in upholding patient rights, safety, and informed decision-making. It lists important strategies for nursing advocacy and the benefits it brings for patients and nurses. The process of becoming a nurse advocate is outlined, with a mention of relevant degree options. The paper acknowledges challenges faced by nurses in patient advocacy, including institutional obstacles. It concludes by suggesting the need for further research to develop managerial and educational theories and enhance patient advocacy in healthcare systems.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, patient advocacy is of paramount importance in the Indian healthcare system to safeguard the rights and well-being of patients. Developing a distinct patient advocacy organization can enhance patient care and protect their rights from the planning stage itself. Nurses play a critical role in patient advocacy, using their extended time with patients to empathize and prioritize their health. By promoting dignity, equality, and patients' civil rights, nurses contribute to better patient outcomes and safer medical environments. Embracing advocacy strategies, such as treating patients with respect, informing and empowering them, and engaging in policy advocacy, can lead to positive impacts on both patients and healthcare professionals. Despite challenges, nurses must persist in their advocacy efforts to uphold human dignity and provide patient-centered care. Implementing nursing advocacy into everyday activities can ensure clarity and comfort for every patient, making it a vital vocation and mindset for nurses in India. As patient advocacy continues to evolve, further research is essential to

develop managerial and educational theories, assess nurse performance, and strengthen patient advocacy plans, ultimately enhancing nursing care in the healthcare system.

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