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The DNP Project Can Catalyze Nurses to Become Health Policy Leaders

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DNP-prepared nurses are excellently positioned to be health policy leaders. One way that DNP faculty can encourage interest in health policy is to offer students the option of choosing a health policy topic for their DNP project. Prominent issues in health care are funding in federal and state budgets, the opioid crisis, quality measures and the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS), scope of practice, signature recognition, title changes, Controlled-Substance Prescribing Agreement (CAPA-CS), Collaborative Practice Agreements, and these are all issues that DNP-prepared nurses can use their voice to contribute to ideas that lead to better patient outcomes and improve patient safety. There are relatively few opportunities for nurses to gain skills and expertise in understanding the policy process, to develop knowledge skills and applications, and to develop policy solutions, and the DNP project is the perfect avenue for students to gain these skills.

Many national nursing organizations have made statements about the integration of health policy into the curriculum of DNP programs. NONPF has stated that health policy is a potential topic for DNP projects. Potential health policy topics have been suggested by organizations. When DNP students choose policy topics, there is often a great opportunity for the student to engage with community agencies, with government representative, and with nonprofit representatives. A review of an online resource that indexes DNP projects demonstrates that some students have chosen policy projects, but there is not a generally accepted template. A proposed template will be presented. Many nurse practitioner educators are not aware that DNP projects can have a health policy focus. Projects could focus on analyzing, interpreting, or creating health policy. Dissemination of information from health policy projects will also be discussed. By mentoring students who are completing DNP projects about health policy topics, DNP faculty are ensuring that advance practice nurses have the knowledge and skills they need to not only have a voice in health policy, but to also be leaders in the field.

Title:

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Abstract Summary:

Nurses are experts in health care. DNP-prepared nurses are well-positioned to lead the development of health policy at local, national and international levels. A compelling argument for DNP students to choose health policy topics for their projects will be presented. A template for policy-related projects will be presented.

Content Outline:

I. Introduction

A. Recent health policy topics include health care funding in federal and state budgets, the opioid crisis, quality measures and the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS), scope of practice, signature recognition, title changes, Controlled-Substance Prescribing Agreement (CAPA-CS), Collaborative Practice Agreements (Number of APRNs with whom a physician can enter into an agreement, expand geographic proximity waivers) (AANP,

B. There are relatively few opportunities for nurses to gain skills and expertise in understanding the policy process, to develop knowledge skills and applications, and to develop policy solutions. (Clearly, Hofler, & Seamon, 2005).

A. Main Point The DNP Program Curriculum and Health Policy Topics

1. Statements from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing and the IOM about nursing and policy

2. Statements from AACN about the DNP degree

3. Statements from NONPF about the DNP degree

B. Main Point #2 The DNP Project and Health Policy

1. Statements from AACN about the DNP Project

2. Statements from NONPF about the DNP Project

C. Main Point #3 A Proposed Template for Health Policy DNP Projects

1. Currently there is not a generally accepted template from DNP policy projects

2. A sample template will be proposed

D. Conclusion

1. DNP-prepared advanced practice nurses are well-positioned to be health policy leaders.

2. The DNP project is a time where faculty can mentor DNP students to help them to find their policy voices.

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