

Title:

Undergraduate Health Policy Education: Impacting the Future of Nursing

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Session Title:

Teaching Health Policy

Slot:

B 14: Saturday, 28 October 2017: 3:15 PM-4:00 PM

Scheduled Time:

3:35 PM

Keywords:

Health Policy, Nursing Education and Political Involvement

References:

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Abstract Summary:

Research examined registered nurses political astuteness and involvement following an undergraduate course in health policy. Results indicated that health policy preparation was a valued component of their curriculum. Participants have pursued health policy advocacy roles within their respective organizations, locally, and at state and federal levels to impact health policy.

Learning Activity:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
<p>The learner will be able to implement health policy education across their current curriculum to prepare nurses for the future.</p>	<p>Problem statement: As of 2008, there were 3.1 million registered nurses (RN's) in the United States (American Nurses Association, 2013). Despite the large number of registered nurses, this group of healthcare professionals historically is glaringly absent in the health policy/political arena. Lewenson (2012) noted the political involvement of the current generation of nurses is marginal in comparison to the health policy gains achieved in the past by Florence Nightingale, Lillian Wald, and others. As a result, the significance of nursing's potential contributions to health policy is diminished. Past research points to the lack of education about health policy and political involvement in undergraduate nursing course work as contributing to the lack of political activity (Byrd, et al 2012; Primomo, 2007; Rains & Barton-Kriese, 2001; Conger & Johnson, 2000). Findings of this phenomenological research will review the five overarching themes that emerged: (1) Education as a Foundation to Political Advocacy, (2) Health Policy Involvement, (3) Characteristics of a Politically Involved Nurse, (4) Perceived Barriers to Political Involvement, and (5) Academia Leading the Way. Inclusion of health policy education, beginning at the undergraduate level, is critical to producing registered nurses to fulfil the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics for Nurses Provision 9 calls for nurses individually, and through professional associations, to be actively involved as advocates for health care policy and social reform (Fowler, 2010, ANA, 2015). Through active participation in legislative and health care issues that directly affect patient care, nurses can effectively advocate for their patients and organizations. Examples of where health policy inclusion will be provided to promote health policy education.</p>

The learner will be able to construct meaningful assignments within their respective courses to reflect health policy immersion.	Examples of current pedagogy utilized for undergraduate nursing education will be discussed that participants of the research felt were beneficial to prepare them for their role as a professional nurse. Strategies to overcome perceived barriers to involvement inclusive of the role of the educator, mentorship, and education as a foundation to political advocacy: inclusive of political awareness and significance of health policy education will be discussed.
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Abstract Text:

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine the impact an undergraduate baccalaureate level nursing course in health policy and political involvement had on registered nurses political astuteness and involvement. Theoretical framework by Cohen, Mason, Kovner, Leavitt, Pulcini, and Sochalski (1996) *Stages of Nursing's Political Involvement* was utilized to analyze nurses' political development and level of participation in the political processes upon completion of the course and entry into practice. Five distinct overarching themes emerged from the data, inclusive of: (1) Education as a foundation to political advocacy: inclusive of political awareness and significance of health policy education; (2) Health policy involvement: organizational involvement and legislative involvement were identified; (3) Characteristics of a politically involved nurse: self-confidence, and political knowledge; (4) Perceived barriers to political involvement included: organizational barriers, fear of retribution, shortage of mentors, and lack of time; and (5) Academia leading the way: educator role and academic inclusion of health policy experiences.

Results indicated that undergraduate health policy education was a valued component of the registered nurses education, yet few colleges and universities offer this preparation at the undergraduate level. Since the completion of the course, (4 years post-graduation) participants have utilized their health policy/political foundation and political voice to pursue health policy roles within their health care organizations and on a local, state or federal level to positively impact health policy.

Findings of this study have significant implications for academia, healthcare facilities, and professional nursing organizations. Assessment of their current professional environments, inclusive of political climate and education, relative to political knowledge and curriculum needs to be undertaken. It is essential to close the knowledge gap whether through a standalone course or infusion of health policy/political domains within existing course work. In doing so, this would promote the knowledge necessary for nurses to lead the way as future advocates for the profession, nursing practice, and quality patient care.