



NMNEC Concept: **Advocacy**

Mega Concept: Professional Nursing

Category: Professional Attributes

Concept Name: Advocacy

Concept Definition:

The act or process of pleading or supporting another's cause by promoting the environment in which the human rights, values, customs, and spiritual beliefs of the individual, the family and the community are respected.

Scope and Categories:

The scope of nursing advocacy is broad, and encompasses professional interactions involving the following categories:

- Individual: The individual patient needs to have an advocate in the nurse that helps the patient retain their freedom to accept, change, or deny medical care. A patient advocate's "role is to educate and empower the patient to make informed decisions in regard to their health and healthcare based on their individual wishes and in keeping with their cultural, spiritual, religious and ethical beliefs". (Patient Advocacy Services, 2020)
- Family: Family should be included in patient healthcare decisions, education, and care as much as possible depending on the patient's wishes, and the family's abilities to cope with the healthcare situation. The nurse advocates for the family as well as the patient to ensure this support system remains intact and functional. The nurse advocates for the patient if the patient's wishes differ from the families and it is related to healthcare decisions that the patient wishes to make independently.
- Community: The nurse functions as an advocate for the community in the realm of health promotion and health preservation. The nurse functions as an individual patient advocate by pairing the patient with needed and available community based health services. (Berman, 2011)
- Health care delivery systems: The nurse advocates for the best possible care within health care systems, with the focus of "health promotion, illness prevention" (Berman, 2011, p. 51) by helping the patient navigate through the applicable health system services.
- Vulnerable populations: "All persons have the right to basic health care and the right to be treated with respect and dignity" (Pacquiao, 2008). Nurse's advocate for vulnerable populations by treating each patient with respect and dignity, and ensuring that the patient has the best care possible based on their culture, health care needs and available resources.



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- Health Care Policy: nurses advocate for improved patient care, workplace condition improvements, health care provision for patient access to care, by utilizing legislative resources on a personal level, joining professional organizations, and participation in the legislative and regulatory processes through a nursing representative.

Attributes/Criteria:

- Identifying patients' needs and finding a way to address it.
- Change agent: The nurse advocates with the patients themselves to change their behavior to achieve improved health or wellness. Advocacy exists within the clinical setting when system change is necessary. Advocacy occurs collectively when nurses join together to implement change in the health care system. (Berman, 2011, p. 9)
- Leadership skills: Nurses promote improved outcomes for patients in all settings.
- Therapeutic use of self-advocacy requires the therapeutic use of self as a patient, family, colleague must be able to experience trust in the nurse who is promoting an action, change in thinking, or in the plan of care for patients, families, and/or co-workers.
- Professional boundaries exist within advocacy as nurses must remain within the realm of influence that is professional and does not violate patient/family or self rights in order for the act of advocacy to promote health and wellness behavior.

Theoretical Links:

- **Sphere of Nursing Advocacy Model** (Hanks, 2005)

Nursing Advocacy provides:

- A protective shield for the patient in vulnerable situations
- Advocacy can take place regardless of setting
- Semi-permeable sphere of advocacy between health care participant and external environment:
 - Allowing for nurse advocacy and health care participant self-advocacy
 - Advocacy of nurse and healthcare participant can be simultaneous
 - Allows health care participant to interact with environment independently, and to self-advocate.
- **Orlando's Nursing Process Discipline Theory** (Petiprin, 2016)
 - The role of the nurse is to find out and meet the patient's immediate need for help (major dimension)
 - Nurses do not assume that any aspect of their reaction to the patient is correct, helpful or appropriate until they check the validity of it in exploration with the patient (investigation)



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This theory is important to advocacy as the process of this nursing function needs to ensure that the advocacy action is in the patient/patient’s best interests and it conforms to the patient’s wishes without the nurse’s inner dialogue and biases contributing to an action that is not in the patient’s best interests and needs.

Context to Nursing/Healthcare:

The knowledge, skills, and attitudes nurses need to successfully advocate for their patients’, their own, and nursing’s behalf includes:

Knowledge	Skills (Tomajan, 2012)	Attitudes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe problem solving skills as they apply to advocacy. 2. Identify appropriate communication styles to use in advocacy 3. Discuss shared governance structures as venues for advocacy. 4. Identify best practices as goals for advocacy 5. Recognize quality and safety initiatives as leverage for advocacy goals. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Problem solving skills: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify the problem b. Develop goals and a strategy c. Plan activities and a time line d. Enlist decision makers’ 2. Communication <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clear and concise message b. Message fits situation and audience c. Factual and consistent d. Includes impact on those affected 3. Influence – ability to alter actions of others. It is built on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Competence – knowing the facts b. Credibility – valuing the interests of those involved c. Trustworthiness d. Building a compelling case 4. Collaboration – working with others to achieve a common goal. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Careful communication 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acknowledge own potential as an advocate for patients, self, and the nursing profession. 2. Value patient centered care as the goal for advocacy. 3. Respect the interest of stakeholders within advocacy.



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	b. Seeking input c. Ongoing reports d. Inclusive of stakeholders 5. Assertiveness	
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Interrelated Concepts:

- **Professional Identity:** “The American Nurses Association (ANA) believes that advocacy is a pillar of nursing. Nurses instinctively 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.” (ANA, 2020)
 - Clinical Judgment is required for the nursing role of advocacy to be successful and appropriate.
 - Caring is an essential part of advocacy. Caring promotes advocacy in that it provides the impetus to affect improved care and comfort for all health care system participants. (Selanders, 2012)
- **Ethics:** “Nurses play an essential role in the consultative process surrounding ethical dilemmas and, as such, must have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to actively participate in this process as ...patient advocates” (ANA, 2011).
- **Collaboration:** Necessary for support in order to address issues and advocate for change. Stakeholders must be heard and represented during the advocacy process. (Tomajan, 2012)
- **Health Care Delivery Systems:** Are changing and “impacting care in all practice settings...These changes can challenge resource allocation decisions and adversely affect the work environment. However, these forces can also create opportunities for nurses and the nursing profession” (Tomajan, 2012).” Nurses need to advocate for realistic changes that meet the needs of both patients and staff” (Tomajan, 2012).
- **Culture:** Recognizing cultural diversity and acting, when possible, in a culturally appropriate manner enables nurses to be more effective in initiating nursing assessments and serving as patient advocates
- **Health Policy:** Will be affected by advocacy in a positive or negative way. Advocacy for all health-care participants in the development of health policy is vital to maintaining a focus on health, wellness, comfort, and values in all health care settings.

Model Case: A nurse is caring for a dying patient who was diagnosed with extensive metastatic breast cancer with sites in the brain and lungs. The patient is obtunded, but complains of severe pain when she wakes up. The nurse caring for her has given all of the ordered medications for pain. The patient has a recent history of needing chronic opioid therapy for pain management prior to this hospitalization. The family has asked that a higher level of

comfort be achieved. The charge nurse intervenes and assesses the situation. The nurse caring for the patient is hesitant to call for more pain medication as the provider was reluctant to increase the pain medication the last time the nurse called. The patient is DNR/DNI. The charge nurse notifies her nursing supervisor and the decision is made to call the physician to meet with the family and reassess the patient's pain management protocol. The meeting occurs within two hours and the physician agrees to add benzodiazepines to the medication regimen as well as increased opioid doses. The patient comfort level increases and she no longer complains of pain when she awakens, but has relaxed facial features and smiles briefly at her children. The patient dies the next day. The family expresses their relief that their mother was allowed a high level of comfort despite larger doses of opioids and sedative medications being given than are usually ordered.

New Mexico Nursing Education Consortium (NMNEC) Required Exemplars:

- Informed consent
- Patient Bill of Rights
- Chain of Command



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