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Advancing the Voice of Nursing Through Leadership: The Current State of the Evidence Base

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Modern nurse educators need to embody and role model leadership behaviors to impact change in the current health care

environment, as well as develop nursing leaders who use their voices to advocate for quality patient care and the nursing

profession. A strong nursing presence that recognizes the vulnerability of populations, as well as socioeconomic and

political factors, is critical for the promotion of healthy communities throughout the world. Nursing leaders in nursing

education and practice are essential for fostering advocacy for access to quality care, inclusive of vulnerable populations,

and health prevention and promotion. Today's health care climate necessitates a strong nursing presence that comes from

the empowerment afforded by solid educational foundations and perspectives. Effective nurse educators masterfully apply

leadership styles and have the necessary skills to drive policy and practice changes, while educating and supporting

students and/or staff to ultimately achieve quality patient outcomes. Nurse educators, in order to be successful leaders

and change agents, have the responsibility to strengthen and retain their leadership competencies in a rapidly changing

health care arena. In addition to the impact of nurse educators' own leadership platforms, including programmatic

improvement, scholarship, or political activism, nurse educators have a unique opportunity to teach and develop

leadership abilities among their students. Nurse educators are charged to develop nurses who can function effectively and

competently in today's health care systems, and act as leaders in nursing and health care. It is essential that nurse

educators possess the competency necessary to not only develop leadership skills in their graduates, but also to inspire

graduate voices in order to affect positive change in nursing and health care. Through nursing research and innovative

pedagogy and practice, leaders in nursing influence education, policy, and professional practice and health care, which

advances nursing practice, education and science. The purpose of this presentation is to outline identified themes in the

most recent, evidence-based literature related to leadership in nursing and nursing education. The themes in the

evidence-based literature spanning the last decade related to leadership in nursing education include: 1) advancing

personal leadership potential; 2) organizational success and change; 3) collaboration for best practices; and 4) advocacy

for change. In order to successfully foster future nurse leaders, it is incumbent upon nurse educators to advance their

personal leadership skills, as well as those of undergraduate and graduate students, through formal and informal

education. Ideally, the leadership competencies and examples exemplified by nurse educators will model leadership skills

for learners, and also empower nursing graduates to act as future change agents. Through their education, and by

engaging with nursing leaders, graduates can glean characteristics which can embolden them to lead by using their voices

to impact change in nursing and health care. Nurse leaders work to bridge gaps in communication and establish

relationships between nursing education, institutions of higher learning and health care systems to positively affect

graduate preparation, and ultimately patient outcomes and cost containment. Today's complex health care delivery system

necessitates strong nursing presence which comes from the empowerment of current and future nurses. Nurses'

influential voices cultivate collaboration between nursing education and practice, as well as interprofessional collaboration,

which can lead to safe, effective and quality patient care. Leaders in nursing are often visionary thinkers, engaging in

opportunities in practice and education, and championing positive changes related to nursing and health care. The voices

of leaders in nursing are instrumental in the development of health policy, changing the delivery of health care to

consumers through board and committee membership, and taking on leadership positions in policy-making organizations.

These themes will be explored in the context of nursing education, nursing practice, and health care delivery and policy.

Insight into the current state of the evidence base, including suggestions as to how to impact change in the current health

care environment will be proposed. Recommendations to stimulate future research, gleaned from the search of the

literature and current evidence-base, are offered to enhance understanding of the nurse educator competency of

functioning as a change agent and leader.

Title:

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Abstract Summary:

Key themes related to leadership in nursing and nursing education in the current, evidence-based literature will be explored in the context of nursing education, nursing practice, and health care delivery and policy. Recommendations for future research and for empowering change in the current health care environment will be offered.

Content Outline:

Introduction:

- 1) Strong nursing presence and voices are essential for the promotion of healthy communities throughout the world.
- 2) Nursing leaders in nursing education and practice are essential for fostering advocacy for access to quality care, inclusive of vulnerable populations, and health prevention and promotion.
- 3) Comprehensive review of the evidence-based literature spanning the last decade related to leadership in nursing education revealed four major related themes.

Main Points:

Themes related to leadership in nursing in the evidence base are explored in the context of nursing education, nursing practice, and health care delivery and policy.

- 1) Advancing personal leadership potential
 1. a) development/role modeling of personal leadership
 2. b) student/staff development and empowerment
- 2) Organizational success and change
 1. a) influence of nursing
 2. b) advocating for safe, effective, quality care
- 3) Collaboration for best practices
 1. a) interprofessional collaboration
 2. b) collaboration between educational and health care institutions
- 4) Advocacy for change
 1. a) leadership positions on boards and committees
 2. b) focus on health policy change
 3. c) effective and inclusive health care delivery

Conclusion:

- 1) Nursing leaders are called to impact change in the current global health care environment to advocate for accessible, and inclusive, quality care.
- 2) Leaders in nursing education have the unique opportunity to develop and utilize their own leadership competencies, as well as foster leadership characteristics in their students.
- 3) Future research recommendations focus on empowering nurse educators to function as change agents and leaders.

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Professional Experience: Dr. Gordon received her Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) from South Dakota State University, her Masters in Management and Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from Colorado Technical University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Nursing from Augustana University. She serves as the Dean of Nursing and Sciences at Minnesota West Community and Technical College in Worthington, MN. She is co-chair of the Practical Nursing and Associate Degree Nursing Program Deans/Directors leadership group in Minnesota. Dr. Gordon has held supervisory/leadership roles in both the Avera and Sanford Health Systems.

Author Summary: Dr. Gordon has served in collegiate nursing leadership and administration in rural and underserved communities for 12 years. Dr. Gordon researches nursing leadership successes and educational learning strategies (such as collaborative testing) in the rural community.

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Professional Experience: Dr. Jennifer A. Specht earned a PhD from Villanova University with her coursework focusing on Nursing Education. Her MSN, also focused on Nursing Education, is from DeSales University; she earned her BSN from Villanova University. Dr. Specht served as the Director of Aria Health's School of Nursing (formally Frankford Hospital School of Nursing). She held faculty appointments at DeSales University and Moravian College prior to her position at Widener University.

Author Summary: Dr. Specht has more than 10 years of academic nursing education experience, as well as nursing leadership and administrative experience. Her areas of interest are focused on mentoring relationships, leadership development, and the LGBTQ community. She has presented her research both nationally and internationally. This presentation is gleaned from a thorough review of the evidence-based literature done in preparation to author a chapter on leadership in the recent NLN Core Competencies for Nurse Educators publication.