

The nursing voice in healthcare policy

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Due to the current economic downturn world healthcare systems are under extreme pressure to meet the increasing demands of service within an ever decreasing financial budget (WHO 2010). The balance of maintaining quality of care and patient safety within this time of tight budgetary constraint needs to remain the primary focus of all healthcare systems. However, decisions will have to be made on how available resources are best utilized. These decisions will undoubtedly have an effect on both the patients we care for and the nursing profession. Therefore, it is imperative that nurses are constructively involved in all healthcare policy decisions to ensure that the focus is not just on money but on safe and effective patient care.

A nursing presence is found in most healthcare policy making groups, but in some instances it can be viewed as merely a tokenistic participation. The voice of nursing needs to be strengthened supported and developed from within the profession both in clinical practice and education. Nursing is a graduate profession, and nurses need to use the strength of this education to lead and play an active part in policy governance structures. Tokenistic participation is not acceptable. A nursing voice should be audible in every healthcare policy making committee. Nurses need to take their voices out of the coffee room and into the boardroom for the benefit of both the patients they care for and the future development of the nursing profession.

Biography

Karen McCutcheon, RGN, PGCHE, M.Sc., Nursing is completing a Doctorate in Nursing Practice at Queen's University Belfast Northern Ireland. She has been a nurse consultant for the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence for over 6 years and has been instrumental to the production of over 250 National guidelines for interventional procedures and National Patient Safety guidelines in the UK. She is currently a teaching fellow at Queen's University Belfast responsible for anesthetic and perioperative nurse training. She is editor of the Journal of Perioperative Practice and has published widely in the field of healthcare and education.

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