

A patient advocacy dilemma: Is it theory...practice... or an ethics gap? A qualitative analysis

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Running title

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Key words

ethics; grounded theory; non-compliance; patient advocacy; theory-practice gap; Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Aim

To consider the probability of a theory-practice-ethics gap, from perceptions of patient advocacy which were revealed from the experiences of amongst Middle Eastern nurses.

Background

Traditionally, the role of an advocate is a fundamental concept for the profession of nursing as it assures the patient rights and their safety. The care provided by a patient advocate is therefore regarded as an ethical ideal. Although numerous studies have acknowledged patient advocacy in nursing, this article reveals concerns related to a theory-practice-ethics gap and non-compliance amongst nurses as advocates.

Methods

The study employed a constructivist grounded theory methodology, with Muslim registered nurses, working in critical care. Semi-structured interviews, with broad open-ended questions, and reflective journals were used to collect data. All interviews were concurrently analyzed and transcribed verbatim.

Results

Despite being mindful of the theory and practice required to be a patient advocate, interrelated with an Islamic moral duty of care, the role-associated risks, coupled with the social and organizational issues were revealed by the participants as reasons for non-compliance to act as patient advocates.

Conclusion:

Participants in the study believed that avoidance of the risks associated with the advocacy role, was a practical option. Therefore, patient advocacy from a Saudi Arabian nursing perspective remains questionable, and further research is required.