

Symposium D4: Culture, Context and Policy: Nurses in Action

Integrative Summary: Culture, Context, and Policy: Nurses in Action

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Policy is defined as rules or principles that guide decisions in order to achieve desired outcomes. Often, the mention of policy connotes images of public policy, that is, formal policy enacted on a national level. Nurses envision testifying before Congress and distance the notion of policy from their personal practice. It is critical that nurses begin to challenge this vision. Organizational policy is contextually-based and influences how nurses practice and, ultimately, the patients' and family caregivers' experiences. In this symposium we address the values and beliefs that constrain and empower nurses to address care needs of patients and families across trajectories of advanced chronic illness. Paper 1 addresses The context of policy: Overview of influences in a culture of care. Findings from an ethnographic study of specialty clinics are presented to highlight variation in five inter-related spheres of cultural influence that is influenced by organizational policy. Paper 2, Nursing Roles: Making the system work, highlights the ways in which nurses' work is shaped by policy, ultimately affecting the experiences of the patients and families that they serve. Finally in Paper 3, Trickled down policy: Impact on patients and family caregivers, explores how nurses, functioning within one of the spheres of cultural influence, made profound differences in their experiences of illness. Sustained efforts shift the culture of care and could impact organizational policy to enhance the role of nurses to better serve critically ill patients and their family caregivers.