

# Perioperative Patient Advocacy: An Integrative Review

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**Purpose:** *The purpose of this review was to identify the characteristics and consequences of perioperative patient advocacy.*

**Design:** *An integrative review method was employed.*

**Methods:** *A database search to identify peer-reviewed articles that focused on perioperative patient advocacy was conducted in PubMed and CINAHL, followed by a manual search for additional articles. Studies were selected if they reported original empirical research findings with regard to perioperative patient advocacy. The data abstraction and synthesis were achieved with an inductive qualitative content analysis.*

**Finding:** *The analysis resulted in seven categories, two subthemes, and one main theme. The main theme, “Doing good for another human being—a balancing act between philanthropy and personal gratification,” was the core of perioperative patient advocacy.*

**Conclusion:** *Perioperative patient advocacy is part of the professional role of the perioperative nurse, and it affects the perioperative nurse emotionally. This advocacy shares similarities with descriptions of patient advocacy in general nursing.*

**Keywords:** *advocacy, integrative review, perioperative nursing.*

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*This study was supported by grants from Örebro University and the Research Committee at Örebro County Council, Örebro, Sweden (grant number OLL-426621).*

*Conflict of interest: No conflict of interest has been declared by the authors.*

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1089-9472/\$36.00

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jopan.2014.12.001>

**PATIENT ADVOCACY HAS** been described as acting on a patient's unmet needs, which may include informing, protecting, and speaking for patients.<sup>1,2</sup> It is also described as a situation in which a patient's requests, fear, vulnerability, or threats to human rights stimulate the nurse to respond to achieve a successful outcome, thereby upholding the patient's choice and guarding against inappropriate practice.<sup>3</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary defines advocacy as the act of one person who is pleading or arguing on someone else's behalf; the term comes from the Medieval Latin word “advocata,” which is derived from “advocare,” meaning to summon and call to one's aid.<sup>4</sup>

The origin of advocacy in nursing arises from the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1970s<sup>1,5</sup> when Annas, an American lawyer, presented the Patient's Bill of Rights suggesting that nurses should act as a Patient Rights Advocate.<sup>6</sup> The

most frequently discussed theoretical advocacy models in nursing are those of Curtin,<sup>7</sup> Gadow,<sup>8</sup> and Kohnke,<sup>9</sup> which are based on the same core value: the belief that autonomy gives all human beings the right to choose their own actions. According to Curtin,<sup>7</sup> the nurse should view the patient as a unique human being and support the patient in philosophical and existential issues. Gadow<sup>8</sup> and Kohnke<sup>9</sup> emphasized that the nurse should offer information and support, thereby facilitating patients in their decision-making.

Patient advocacy in nursing has been studied in two recent concept analyses. Bu and Jezewski<sup>10</sup> identified three core attributes of patient advocacy in their concept analysis: safeguarding patient autonomy, acting on behalf of patients, and promoting social justice in healthcare. In the concept analysis by Baldwin,<sup>11</sup> there are three essential attributes of patient advocacy: valuing, apprising, and interceding. Both positive and negative consequences are linked with patient advocacy according to Bu and Jezewski<sup>10</sup> and Baldwin.<sup>11</sup> Successful patient advocacy generates positive outcomes for nurses, such as increased professional satisfaction, self-confidence, and self-esteem, in addition to maintenance of their personal integrity and moral principles.<sup>10,11</sup> The negative consequences of patient advocacy not only might result in the loss of reputation, friends, and self-esteem, but also in conflicts leading to moral distress and/or moral dilemmas,<sup>10</sup> and nurses can, according to Baldwin, be dismissed as a consequence of their actions related to patient advocacy.<sup>11</sup>

Because advocacy implies taking action on behalf of another, it is particularly appropriate in the perioperative environment where patients are vulnerable because of sedation or general anesthesia.<sup>5</sup> In those situations, patients relinquish control over their bodies and their situation and must rely on people who are strangers to them.<sup>12</sup> Perioperative nursing practice can be described as nursing activities performed by a perioperative nurse in the preoperative, intraoperative, and postoperative phases of the patient's surgical experience.<sup>13</sup> In this review, the perioperative nurse can be either a nurse anesthetist or an operating room nurse.

The patient advocacy role has previously been highlighted in the nursing profession and in

concept analyses, but no review could be found relating to the perioperative nurse's patient advocacy role. By defining patient advocacy in the perioperative environment, a greater understanding of perioperative patient advocacy could be achieved, forming a base for theory development within the perioperative nursing context.

## The Review

### *Aim*

The aim of the review was to identify the characteristics of perioperative patient advocacy and the consequences that follow with perioperative patient advocacy from the perspective of the perioperative nurse.

### *Design*

An integrative review approach was adopted. As previously outlined by Whitemore and Knaff<sup>14</sup> and Broome,<sup>15</sup> this approach summarizes past empirical and theoretical literature and incorporates diverse methodologies to capture the context, processes, and subjective elements of the topic. The advantages of the integrated review are that with the combination of data from different types of research designs, it may increase the depth and breadth and contribute to a complete description of the topic of interest.<sup>16</sup>

### *Search Methods*

In line with the integrative review approach, a comprehensive database search to identify peer-reviewed articles that focus on perioperative patient advocacy was conducted in PubMed and CINAHL. The search was conducted by the first author and an experienced librarian. The databases were searched for English-language articles using the following keywords: "patient advocacy" or "advocacy" in combination with "perioperative nursing," "operating room nursing," "nurse anesthetist," "theater nurse," or "operating room nurse." No date restrictions were applied up until the search date of January 2014. An assessment of each article was conducted for its relevance to the topic of interest. First, the titles and abstracts of each search result were examined to identify scientific articles reporting original empirical research findings with regard to perioperative

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