Postpartum Depression In Working Women: Creation of a National Policy

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify the process used to create a national evidence based policy on perinatal mental health
2. Define the role and value of nurse practitioners in the creation of evidence based healthcare policy at local, state, and national levels.
3. Identify the effects of postpartum depression on mothers, fathers, children, and workplace health.
4. Describe the value of screening, referral, treatment and education in reducing the incidence and severity of postpartum depression.
Why is advocacy and political involvement a part of nursing?

All nurses have an ethical duty to the patients and populations that we serve to be involved in the creation of health care policies that not only affect patient care, but that also alter the ability of the nursing profession to deliver that care.

Nurse practitioners have an additional duty to serve as advocates for our profession to remove restrictive language in statutes that limit our practice and patients’ access to our care.
Why is advocacy and political involvement a part of nursing?

Nurse practitioners have a unique skillset, a holistic mindset, and a focus on wellness and health promotion that provides the perfect framework to approach the process of health care policy creation at local, state, and national levels.
Why is advocacy and political involvement a part of nursing?

Professional nursing skills are highly transferable to a variety of settings and populations.

Nurse practitioners are experts in communication skills that involve dealing with people who experiencing varying levels of physical or psychological stress, whether they are individual patients, groups of patients, communities, or colleagues.
Why is advocacy and political involvement a part of nursing?

Nurse practitioners are experts in assessment and intervention for highly complex physical and psychosocial needs, a skill that can be very useful in evaluating the political climate or the opposing viewpoint of a stakeholder.
Why is advocacy and political involvement a part of nursing?

Nurse practitioners are aware and respectful of cultural, religious, ethnic, educational, gender differences- skills that are highly transferable in the area of health care policy creation.

These skills are especially useful in advocacy for those who can not speak for themselves such as children or minorities who are under-represented in the political arena.
Why is advocacy and political involvement a part of nursing?

Nurse practitioners have experience in providing care to individuals, groups, and populations that health care policy makers rarely have.

This “lived experience” of providing the care that policies are designed to implement creates a unique point of view of being on both sides of an issue, a position that policy maker find highly valuable.
Why is advocacy and political involvement a part of nursing?

Nurse practitioners have expertise in collecting, evaluating, and transferring published healthcare research into evidence based practice that can be used to create health policy that reflects current research findings.

This specific skill set is one that is especially highly regarded by policy makers and is one that is difficult to replicate by most policy makers.
Why is advocacy and political involvement a part of nursing?

Nurses are the most trusted profession and have respect among the majority of voters perhaps due to their compassion, passion for justice, beneficence, and sense of equity.

These skills are essential in health care policy creation and are interwoven in core nursing ethical and educational documents.
Role of the NP in Creation of Health Care Policy

Professional responsibility of all NPs to effect policy change:

• ANA Guide to the Code of Ethics for Nurses
  • Beneficence
  • Justice
  • Non-maleficence
    - Through political action and involvement to benefit the common good

• AACN- describes political engagement and advocacy as essential skills for education in advanced practice nursing
Role of the NP in Creation of Health Care Policy

There were an estimated 205,000 NPs in the US in 2014 according to AANP.

Through numbers alone, NPs can make a difference in improving healthcare for the patients and populations we serve by voting for policies that improve health and increase access and by becoming involved in the policy making process.
Role of the NP in Creation of Health Care Policy

What are the steps in becoming involved as a health care policy advocate?

The following is a case study of how one NP became involved in creation of an evidence based national health care policy.
Developing a Passion

As nurses, we all develop an area of interest through work experience, education, personal or family health issues. Focus on an health need, specific population, or a disparity that sparks your interest.

Learn all that you can about that topic, and develop a clinical question surrounding that issue by narrowing the focus to a single statement or problem.

From that question, formulate a PICO question.
What is the best approach to create an evidence based national policy that reduces the incidence and severity of postpartum depression?

**P**- pregnant and postpartum women

**I**- prevention, early detection, and intervention for postpartum depression

**C**- effects of detected untreated postpartum depression

**O**- best policy to reduce incidence and severity of postpartum depression with lowest cost and highest efficacy rate
Review Published Literature on PICO

Perform a review of all literature published in the last 10 years on your PICO question.

May need to narrow to the last 5 years if you have too much.

May need to narrow further if your topic or issue is too broad especially if it is a large topic such as breast cancer.

Look for gaps in the literature or service by your experience or literature search.
Communicating With Policy Makers

Create an “elevator speech” and a policy brief –

• Short written summary of literature findings and clinical experience that is relevant to the issue

• Provide evidence from literature to back up a need for change in current policy or creation of new one

• Elevator speech- one or two minute verbal description of the problem and the change you want to see

  • this is a very powerful tool and often the one that gains the most interest from policy makers
Communicating With Policy Makers

- Identify those stakeholders who create policy at local, state, or national levels
- Read biographies to identify those policy makers who may share an interest in your population or health care issue
- Make appointment(s) to meet with policy maker or aide
  - Elevator speech and policy brief – both are essential
  - Less is more when talking
  - Be persistent- one appointment may not be sufficient to get your point across
Pushing the Agenda Forward

Offer to volunteer in a political office or agency

- Hard to turn down a volunteer
- Volunteer positions may turn into paid positions over time
- Use evidence from published literature to create a draft of new policy
- Involve as many stakeholders as possible in creation of new policy to obtain endorsement
- Be willing to draft, and redraft the policy many times before it is codified or endorsed
- Keep an open mind since most policy is rejected many times before it is accepted
Spread the Word About the New Policy

Disseminate the results of your work:

• Talk with other professionals within and outside of your professional training to share your passion for change

• Write articles for publication on what you have done
  - Popular press
  - Peer reviewed articles

• Speak at public gatherings for professional or general audiences

• Never lose your passion for change for the common good
Postpartum depression is a key health problem that affects mothers, infants, children, fathers, and the workplace.

Estimates indicate that 1 out of every 7 births will be effected.

Effects may be longstanding especially for children.

Education, screening, colocation of mental health services are included in the new policy.
Background for Creation of the New Policy

Though postpartum depression is a major health problem with long term effects, it has not been a focus of mental health advocacy agencies and policy makers.

By identifying this gap and offering evidence from published literature on the need for a policy change, policy makers and stakeholders were made aware of the need for a new policy.
Evidence From Published Literature Included in New Policy

- Symptoms
- Risk factors
- Working women as a unique sub-population
- Effects of no intervention
- Screening
- Treatment
- Education
Symptoms of Postpartum Depression

- Feelings of lethargy
- Lack of enjoyment in usual activities
- Sadness
- Lack of interest in self or infant care,
- Difficulty sleeping when the infant is cared for by others
- Poor appetite or excessive hunger
  - These are some of the symptoms, there are many others and they are different than those of generalized depression.
Risk Factors

Can occur any time during pregnancy up to a year postpartum- most likely from 4 weeks to 4 months post-partum.

High risk factors-

• History of depression
• Poor social support during pregnancy or postpartum period
• Poverty or low wage job with high stress
More Risk Factors

Can occur any time during pregnancy up to a year postpartum

High risk factors-

• Stressful lifestyle
• Night shift work
• Poor health promotion practices
• Trauma from IPV or during birthing process
• African American race
Workingwomen as a Unique Population

- Untreated depression is the high healthcare cost for employers.
- 48% of US workers are women of reproductive age
- 59% of mothers with young children are employed, a steadily increasing trend
- Working mothers experience a stress from work, and home, may have little time for self care and are more vulnerable to postpartum depression than previously thought
Effects of Untreated Postpartum Depression

Women - higher rates of physical illness, workplace absenteeism, poor job performance, increased disability, relationship conflict and substance use

Children - poor school performance, increases in ADHD, asthma, and emergency room visits

Fathers - increased risk for depression especially if mother is depressed

Workplace - high insurance costs, disability costs, absenteeism, poor work performance
Prevention

Mental wellness –
Sleep, diet, exercise, social support, vitamins, sunlight exposure

Role of physical health and mental health- physical health affects mental health and mental health affects physical health

Education about risk factors and mental wellness activities can prevent depression in many women.
Screening Tools

Edinburgh Postnatal depression Screen (EPDS)- most frequently used tool for postpartum women

Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9)- most frequently used tool for all populations to screen for depression
Screening Opportunities

Pregnancy-
- First prenatal visit
- Repeat third trimester
- More frequent screen for those at highest risk

Postpartum-
- In hospital or birthing center
- RN home visit
- WIC appointments
- Maternal postpartum exam at 2 or 6 weeks
- Well Child visits
- As condition for return to work – added to new policy
Referral and Treatment

Co-location of mental health services within primary care setting:

• Improve access
• Reduce stigma
• Improve compliance

Types of treatment

• Cognitive or talk therapy
• Non-pharmacologic therapy - sleep, sunlight, vitamins, exercise, social support
• Pharmacologic therapy
Key Additions From Literature Added to New Policy

Education, and screening are essential and should be done in healthcare settings and at work by healthcare professionals.

Mental health services should be co-located or integrated within the setting where screening is performed to improve compliance.

Maternal mental health has lasting impact on the mother, father, and child, so early identification and treatment is essential.
Summary of Role of APRN in Policy Creation

1. Develop a passion for making a difference
2. Clearly define a problem or gap in service
3. Perform a review of published literature
4. Create an “elevator speech” and written materials to support a need for change
5. Approach agency director or policy maker regarding the problem and the need for a change in policy
6. Offer to work as volunteer for agency in drafting a new policy
7. Collaborate with others in drafting the new policy
Summary of Role of APRN in Policy Creation

Nurse practitioners have a unique skillset that is highly transferable and desirable in the creation of healthcare policy.

By numbers alone, we CAN make a difference.

Find your passion and begin your path to change the world from here!