

Lobbying in Nursing: Overcome the Hurdles to Flourish

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Abstract

Lobbying is the act of persuading law makers professionally by a lobbyist. It is the need of the time in nursing to adopt the principles of lobbying to enjoy the rights and social status in India. As lobbying is not a legal practice in India, professional and labour organisations have vital role in convencing government authorities during amendment of law for the benefits of nursing professionals. Identify and develop professionals to practice lobbying is very important to survive and flourish.

Keywords: Lobbying, Nurse Lobbyists, Legislators, Social Status

Introduction

Lobbying in nursing is communicating nurses views on local, state, or national policy issues to the elected officials in a timely and effective manner leads to a favourable change in the quality practice of profession.

Lobbying is the act of attempting to influence decisions made by officials in the government, most often legislators or members of regulatory agencies. Lobbying in India is not formalized. It is still considered as a corrupt practice to accomplish somebody's interest. In India, lobbying in Nursing too stuck with socio-political issues. A large part of professional nursing policies is influenced by bureaucrats and other non-professionals people. Although the constitution of India is not legalized lobbying, our western counterparts have nurse lobbyists in their country. For instance, ANA is considered as a powerful and influential advocate for the nurses of America. Globally nurses are the largest medical professional but have little role in policy making that affects health care delivery. The few reasons may be lack of awareness, inadequate skills, little opportunity, lack of time, resources and support.

Who is a Lobbyist?

M D Century code defines "Lobbyist as any person who in any manner whatsoever, directly or indirectly, performs any of the following activities":

- Attempts to secure the passage, amendment or defeat of any legislation by the legislative assembly or approval or veto of any legislation by the governor of the state.

- Attempts to influence decisions made by legislative council or by an interim committee of the legislative council.

Social Status of Nurses in India

It is well known fact that, nurses in India struggle with poor life quality. Good status is connected with wealth, occupational status and societal recognition. Professional nurses experience issues such as less salary, uncomfortable working environment, poor labour policy and further exploitation by the private/corporate sector. Even well skilled and proficient nurses felt forsaken. There are shared feelings of neglect, late marriages, sexual harassment, etc. given by many nurses. Statements of regret for being a nurse are also shared by certain nurses. A long run to go to fade away all these prejudices existing among the general public. Quality higher education and a recent change in nomenclature of staff nurse have effect to some extent. Further, two third of registered nurses are beyond the reach of these privileges. Effort of Indian Nursing Council to upgrade all diploma nurses in India is laudable.

Need of Lobbying in Nursing

Lobbying is a transfer of information, the art of persuasion, the contact and relationship building to push a policy maker for policies that benefit the nursing profession. Lobbying activities must include activities that are done to influence policies, appointment, government schemes by private communication and must not include communication that takes place in public through print or digital media to

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influence policies. On the other hand, research work done for the government by an external source. Policy decisions backed up by sophisticated research are likely to benefit the nursing profession. Nurses can participate in the process of policy making. Lobbyists can stand for the concerns of nurses who do not have the opportunity or access to represent them personally to the government. To exemplify this, there are many informal groups of nurses trying to convince government authorities to create vacancies, privileges, work place harassments etc. All went vain due to lack of support, while the medicos enjoying all the benefits.

Role of Professional Organizations, Trade Unions and Regulatory Bodies in Lobbying

However, lobbying is not a legal professional practice in India, it is the need of the hour to practice a systematic advocacy for the nursing profession. Professional organizations and trade unions should develop a strategic plan to convince the government authorities and propose a panel of nurse lobbyists. These lobbyists have better access to lawmakers than others. According to Indian Nursing Council, there are 1.8 million nurses registered up to 2015 and more being added there after. But scarcity is still persisting according to government sources. It is due to the unequal distribution of skilled nurses around India. India's private health care system is largely unregulated, opaque and often unscrupulous. Besides public health system is overcrowded and underfunded. The dominance of non-nursing lobbies made things worst. This is high time to ponder about the issue and come up with a solution. We need a collective approach towards the issues, involves professional organizations, trade unions and regulatory bodies work together systematically. Nursing organizations around India can recognize the individual talents who can flourish in lobbying and train them to become a full-time lobbyist.

Qualities to Vest by an Effective Lobbyist

According to Conor McGrath, the personal characteristics of effective lobbyists are:

- A good listener

An effective lobbyist is a keen listener towards the valuable inputs from their environment. This is as important as other mode of communication. They should carefully listen to the policy makers and other stake holders.

- Observant

Effective information gathering is vital for a lobbyist to utilize the situations efficiently.

- Gender

It is evident that the global scenario of lobbying is favorable with women. Studies show that women are superior than men at lobbying.

- Courtesy

A lobbyist must behave in a pleasant and courteous manner. Courtesy and politeness prevent the disagreement with policy makers to a great extent as they have other priority matters to consider.

- Relationship skills

Proactive relationship skills have strategic position in lobbying. It helps to gain support and persuade policy makers.

- Honesty

Honesty is an important requirement of lobbying. This will help to improve the integrity and consistency between parties.

Conclusion

Changes can happen over time. Indeed, nurses of India need to be proactive in carving a niche in main stream health care industry. As this is the suitable time to strive towards the goal. Favorable factors such as higher quality education and organized nurses around India can do a better job than before. Otherwise a good proportion of nurses will drain from the country. In my view, for a better cause adopting modern approaches like lobbying is obvious for the betterment of profession.

Conflict of Interest: None

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