Advocacy, an important component of nursing professional practice, is pivotal to ensuring that nurses’ experience and insight influence public policy. Understanding how to become engaged and receive training to inform that process can support nurses’ professional development. Such engagement ensures that nurses’ unique insights inform the policies that affect patient care and professional practice in oncology and beyond.

**Overview**

Advocacy is multifaceted and fundamentally involves identifying a cause or issue, building support for this cause, and influencing decision-making bodies, such as state or national legislatures, to take action toward a desired outcome (Webb, 2016). The cause or issue is often identified by professional organizations, including ANA (2019a), but may also evolve organically from affected individuals or communities. Once identified, the issue is then promoted to individuals with decision-making capacity, specifically legislators. Influence is asserted through a range of activities, including calls, petitions, in-person meetings with legislators, and funding to support outcomes through political action committees (ANA, 2019b). It is important to understand that, although advocacy inherently involves activities in the political arena, it is not dependent on political party affiliation. Many healthcare policy issues are broadly supported by members of differing parties, such as the Cancer Care Planning and Communications Act (Stone, 2019a).

The roots of nursing advocacy are evident in the work of Florence Nightingale, who addressed issues of social injustice and served as a shadow author for government documents on health care, the foreshadowing of what we now define as public policy (Selanders & Crane, 2012). This was embodied by pioneering nurses such as Lillian D. Wald, who advocated for immigrant workers (Christopher, Hawkey, & Jared, 2016). Similarly, Deborah Mayer, PhD, RN, AOCNS®, FAAN, interim director of the National Cancer Institute’s (NCI’s) Office of Cancer Survivorship, is an oncology nurse who has been influential in shaping oncology healthcare policy.

**Advocacy**

The pivotal role of oncology nurses

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