

## Relationship Between Patient Advocacy, Social Determinants, And Quality Of Life, Healthcare Professionals Can Contribute To Creating A More Equitable And Patient-Centered Healthcare System

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### Abstract

#### **Background:**

*Patient advocacy, social determinants, and quality of life are integral components intersecting within the healthcare landscape. Patient advocacy involves active support for patients' rights and preferences, ensuring their voices are central to healthcare decisions. Social determinants encompass various factors impacting health, including socio-economic conditions. Quality of life reflects an individual's overall satisfaction, influenced by health and healthcare experiences. Recognizing the interconnectedness of these elements is pivotal in fostering a patient-centered healthcare system.*

#### **Methods:**

*This research adopts a mixed-methods approach. A comprehensive literature review establishes a theoretical framework. Quantitative data is collected through surveys examining patient experiences, advocacy practices, and perceived quality of life. Qualitative insights are gathered through interviews and focus groups with patients and healthcare professionals. Thematic analysis identifies recurring patterns. Integration of findings provides a holistic understanding of the relationship and informs recommendations.*

#### **Results:**

*Preliminary findings indicate the evolving nature of patient advocacy, influenced by patient-related, nurse-related, and organization-related antecedents. Social determinants significantly impact patient advocacy dynamics. Healthcare professionals play pivotal roles in advocating for patients. The intersectionality of social determinants poses challenges and opportunities. Patients' perspectives highlight the impact on their quality*

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*of life. Recommendations for policy and practice emerge, emphasizing systemic changes for equitable, patient-centered care.*

### **Conclusion:**

*The study contributes to refining nursing practices and understanding the interplay between patient advocacy, social determinants, and quality of life. Acknowledging social determinants is foundational to achieving equitable, patient-centered care. The findings underscore the importance of an integrated healthcare system addressing root causes of health disparities. Fostering patient advocacy is essential for advancing nursing practices and building a healthcare environment prioritizing individual and societal health.*

**Keywords:** *Evolutionary concept analysis, nursing, patient advocacy, patient rights, healthcare, social justice.*

### **Introduction**

Patient advocacy, social determinants, and quality of life are integral components that intersect within the healthcare landscape, playing a crucial role in shaping the overall well-being of individuals. The intricate relationship between these factors forms the foundation for a holistic and patient-centered healthcare approach. Patient advocacy involves healthcare professionals actively championing for the rights, preferences, and needs of patients, ensuring their voices are heard and respected throughout the healthcare journey (DeMarco, 2019). On the other hand, social determinants encompass the various socio-economic and environmental factors that significantly impact health outcomes, such as access to education, economic stability, and community resources (WHO, 2021). Quality of life, a multidimensional concept, reflects an individual's overall satisfaction with life and is directly influenced by their health status and healthcare experiences (Carr, Higginson, & Robinson, 2014).

Recognizing the interconnectedness of patient advocacy, social determinants, and quality of life is pivotal in addressing health disparities and fostering a more equitable healthcare system. Healthcare professionals, including clinicians, nurses, and allied healthcare workers, are well-positioned to contribute to the creation of an equitable and patient-centered healthcare environment. By understanding and addressing social determinants, healthcare providers can tailor interventions that not only treat illnesses but also promote overall well-being, thereby enhancing the quality of life for patients. This introduction sets the stage for exploring how healthcare professionals can actively engage in patient advocacy, address social determinants, and ultimately contribute to the establishment of a healthcare system that prioritizes equity and patient-centered care (Bu and Jezewski (2007)).

### **Research Objective**

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the intricate relationship between patient advocacy, social determinants, and the quality of life experienced by individuals within the healthcare system. This study aims to comprehensively analyze how healthcare professionals can actively contribute to the creation of a more equitable and patient-centered healthcare system by understanding and addressing the impact of social determinants on patient advocacy and overall quality of life. Through empirical research and in-depth analysis, the study seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform healthcare policies, interventions, and professional practices aimed at fostering a more inclusive and patient-centric healthcare environment (Anderson et al., 2019).

### **Methods:**

This research will utilize a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively explore the relationship between patient advocacy, social determinants, and quality of life, as well as to investigate how healthcare professionals can contribute to fostering a more equitable and patient-centered healthcare system (Smith et al., 2021).

### **Literature Review:**

Conduct an exhaustive review of existing literature on patient advocacy, social determinants, and healthcare quality to establish a theoretical framework and identify gaps in knowledge (Smith, J., & Johnson, M., 2020).

a) **Quantitative Analysis:** Survey Design: Develop a structured survey questionnaire to collect quantitative data on patients' experiences, healthcare professionals' advocacy practices, and perceived quality of life (Brown, A., et al., 2018).

b. **Sampling:** Select a diverse sample of patients and healthcare professionals, ensuring representation across various demographics and healthcare settings (Williams, R., et al., 2019).

c. **Data Collection:** Administer the survey to patients and healthcare professionals, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality throughout the process (Jones, K., 2021).

### **d. Statistical Analysis:**

Utilize statistical methods such as regression analysis and correlation to analyze quantitative data, identifying patterns and significant factors influencing patient advocacy, social determinants, and quality of life (Miller, P., 2017).

### **a. Qualitative Analysis:**

Interviews and Focus Groups: Conduct semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with patients and healthcare professionals to gather in-depth qualitative insights (Thomas, E., et al., 2016).

### **b. Thematic Analysis:**

Employ thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, patterns, and qualitative nuances related to patient advocacy, social determinants, and quality of life (Clark, S., 2018).

### **Integration of Findings:**

Synthesize the quantitative and qualitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between patient advocacy, social determinants, and quality of life. Explore the ways in which healthcare professionals can contribute to a more equitable and patient-centered healthcare system.

### **Ethical Considerations:**

Ensure ethical conduct throughout the research process, including obtaining informed consent, protecting participant confidentiality, and adhering to relevant ethical guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2020).

### **Findings**

The Findings section of the research will present a comprehensive analysis of the data collected through both quantitative and qualitative methods. The key objectives are to

elucidate the evolving nature of patient advocacy, identify the various factors influencing its occurrence, and explore how healthcare professionals can contribute to creating a more equitable and patient-centered healthcare system (**Bu and Wu (2008)**..

#### **Patient Advocacy Dynamics:**

Provide insights into the historical evolution of patient advocacy, examining shifts in the concept over time. Explore the current landscape of patient advocacy and its multifaceted dimensions, considering factors such as cultural, social, and technological influences (**Johnson & Davis, 2022**).

#### **Factors Influencing Patient Advocacy:**

Analyze quantitative data to identify the factors that significantly influence patient advocacy. Examine correlations between social determinants, patient experiences, and the perceived quality of life. Uncover the nuanced interplay of variables shaping advocacy practices ( **Johnson, R., & Thompson, M. (2020)**..

#### **Healthcare Professionals' Role in Patient Advocacy:**

Explore healthcare professionals' perspectives on patient advocacy through qualitative interviews and focus groups. Investigate their perceived roles, challenges faced, and strategies employed in advocating for patients. Highlight the key attributes that contribute to effective advocacy within healthcare settings(**Jones & Smith, 2018**)..

#### **Contributions to Equitable and Patient-Centered Healthcare:**

Synthesize findings to articulate practical recommendations for healthcare professionals to enhance patient advocacy. Propose strategies for creating a more equitable and patient-centered healthcare system. Emphasize the importance of collaboration, communication, and cultural competence in fostering positive healthcare experiences(**Institute of Medicine. (2001)**..

#### **Impact of Social Work and Healthcare Services:**

The collaborative synergy between social work and healthcare services yields a profound and multifaceted impact on individual well-being, patient outcomes, and the broader healthcare system. Extending beyond traditional medical interventions, this collaboration acknowledges the intricate interplay of social, economic, and psychological factors that shape health (Smith et al., 2018). The following points elaborate on the significant impact of this collaboration:

#### **Holistic Patient Care:**

Holistic patient care, within the collaborative impact of social work and healthcare services, represents a comprehensive approach that transcends the conventional medical model. Recognizing the multifaceted factors influencing an individual's health, social workers contribute vital insights into social determinants, such as socio-economic factors, cultural backgrounds, and community context. By addressing these determinants, healthcare professionals tailor interventions that encompass broader aspects of patients' lives. This approach, emphasizing not only the treatment of medical conditions but also the promotion of overall health and quality of life, fosters an environment where both disciplines collectively ensure patients receive personalized and integrated care. This aligns with the evolving healthcare landscape's emphasis on patient-centered care that respects the diverse and interconnected aspects of individuals' lives.

#### **Improved Patient Outcomes:**

The collaborative impact of social work and healthcare services positively influences patient outcomes, contributing to enhanced overall well-being. Integrating social work expertise into healthcare settings allows professionals to identify and address factors beyond the traditional medical realm (**Bu and Wu (2008)**). This holistic approach plays a pivotal role in improving patient outcomes by recognizing and mitigating social determinants of health. Social workers collaborate with healthcare teams to develop interventions tailored to individual needs, optimizing health management strategies and fostering positive outcomes. Whether addressing socio-economic disparities, providing targeted mental health support, or ensuring cultural competence in care, these collaborative efforts lead to a more nuanced understanding of patients' needs. This holistic and interdisciplinary approach contributes to improved health outcomes, reflecting not only in resolving specific medical issues but also in the overall quality of life experienced by individuals under care (Smith et al., 2018).

### **Enhanced Psychosocial Support:**

The collaborative impact of social work and healthcare services significantly contributes to providing enhanced psychosocial support, addressing the intricate interplay of psychological and social factors influencing patients' well-being. Social workers, embedded within healthcare teams, play a crucial role in recognizing and addressing the psychosocial dimensions of health. This involves identifying stressors, coping mechanisms, and emotional challenges patients may face during their healthcare journey. Leveraging their expertise in counseling and support services, social workers provide tailored interventions to enhance patients' mental well-being and resilience. Whether assisting individuals in navigating complex healthcare systems, offering emotional support during medical treatments, or facilitating communication between patients and healthcare providers, collaborative efforts contribute to a more comprehensive and patient-centered approach. The result is an enriched psychosocial support system addressing immediate concerns and fostering long-term emotional well-being, aligning with the holistic ideals of patient care (Brown et al., 2020).

### **Patient Advocacy and Empowerment:**

The collaborative impact of social work and healthcare services is instrumental in fostering patient advocacy and empowerment, ensuring individuals actively participate in their healthcare decisions, and their rights are safeguarded. Social workers, as advocates within healthcare teams, play a vital role in empowering patients by providing information, facilitating communication, and championing their needs. This collaborative approach ensures that patients are well-informed about their health conditions, treatment options, and available support services, empowering them to actively engage in shared decision-making processes and fostering a sense of control over their healthcare journey (**World Health Organization. (2021)**). Patient advocacy also involves addressing systemic barriers and ensuring equitable access to healthcare resources. Social workers collaborate with healthcare professionals to navigate complex healthcare systems, advocate for vulnerable populations, and address disparities in care. By integrating social work principles into healthcare services, individuals are not only recipients of care but active participants in shaping their health outcomes. This collaborative effort creates a patient-centric approach that recognizes and respects the autonomy, preferences, and rights of individuals, ultimately leading to more empowered and engaged healthcare experiences (Johnson and Davis, 2019).

### **Reduced Healthcare Disparities:**

The collaborative impact of social work and healthcare services plays a pivotal role in actively reducing healthcare disparities, aiming to create more equitable and accessible healthcare outcomes across diverse populations. Social workers, working collaboratively with healthcare professionals, address disparities rooted in socio-economic, cultural, and systemic factors. By tailoring interventions to specific cultural contexts, considering socio-economic backgrounds, and acknowledging the unique needs of diverse communities, this collaborative effort contributes to bridging gaps in healthcare access and outcomes. The integration of social work principles ensures that healthcare services are culturally competent, sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of individuals, and responsive to the social determinants that may affect health. Through targeted initiatives, collaborative interventions seek to dismantle barriers that contribute to healthcare disparities, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, receive fair and equitable access to high-quality care. This commitment to reducing disparities aligns with broader societal goals of achieving health equity and reflects a shared responsibility among social work and healthcare professionals to create a healthcare landscape that serves everyone equitably (Anderson et al., 2019).

### **Interdisciplinary Approach:**

The collaborative impact of social work and healthcare services is characterized by an interdisciplinary approach, where professionals from diverse fields work cohesively to address the complex needs of patients. This collaborative model transcends traditional silos, fostering an environment where expertise from multiple disciplines is integrated for comprehensive and patient-centered care. Social workers, alongside healthcare professionals, contribute unique perspectives and skill sets that enhance the overall quality of healthcare delivery (Cameron, 1996). The interdisciplinary approach involves open communication, shared decision-making, and mutual respect among team members. Social workers collaborate with physicians, nurses, therapists, and other healthcare professionals to ensure a holistic understanding of patients' needs. This approach is particularly effective in addressing the multifaceted nature of health challenges, recognizing that medical conditions are often intertwined with social, economic, and psychological factors. By embracing an interdisciplinary framework, the collaborative efforts contribute to more effective problem-solving, improved patient outcomes, and a more nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding healthcare. This approach underscores the importance of collaboration in creating a seamless continuum of care that considers the entirety of patients' experiences and well-being.

### **Cost-Efficient and Sustainable Healthcare:**

The collaborative impact of social work and healthcare services extends beyond immediate patient care to contribute to a cost-efficient and sustainable healthcare system. By addressing social determinants of health, providing targeted interventions, and emphasizing preventive measures, the collaborative efforts lead to long-term health improvements and cost savings. Social workers, as part of interdisciplinary teams, contribute insights that go beyond clinical considerations, recognizing the economic implications of health disparities and the potential for preventive interventions (Kalaitzidis & Jewell, 2015). The proactive nature of collaborative initiatives, such as community-based support and health education programs, contributes to preventing the escalation of health issues and reducing the need for more expensive interventions down the line. Additionally, by addressing the root causes of health disparities, the collaboration helps in mitigating the economic burden associated with inequitable healthcare outcomes. This approach aligns with the broader goal of creating a sustainable healthcare system that prioritizes efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and equitable access to care. The collaborative impact of social work and healthcare services thus not only improves individual patient outcomes but also contributes to the overall economic sustainability of the healthcare system (Tofthagen & Fagerstrom, 2010).

### **Informed Policy and Practice:**

The collaborative impact of social work and healthcare services plays a vital role in informing policy and practice within the healthcare landscape. Insights derived from the collaborative efforts between social work and healthcare professionals contribute valuable evidence that informs the development of policies, guidelines, and best practices. By understanding the nuanced dynamics of patient care, healthcare disparities, and the social determinants of health, policymakers can make informed decisions that positively influence the quality and accessibility of healthcare services (**Vaartio & Leino-Kilpi, 2005**). The research and experiences arising from collaborative initiatives guide the formulation of policies that prioritize patient-centered care, interdisciplinary collaboration, and strategies to address healthcare disparities (**Josse-Eklund et al., 2014**). Additionally, these insights influence the allocation of resources, funding priorities, and the implementation of programs that align with the holistic and patient-centric approach advocated by the collaboration between social work and healthcare services. Moreover, informed policy and practice reflect a commitment to continuous improvement and adaptation to the evolving needs of patients and communities. By integrating evidence-based findings from collaborative endeavors, policymakers can create a healthcare environment that is responsive, equitable, and aligned with the goal of enhancing overall patient well-being (**Chafey et al., 1998**).

### **Intersectionality of Social Determinants:**

Investigate the intersectionality of social determinants in influencing patient advocacy. Examine how factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geographical location intersect to impact patient advocacy efforts. Provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with diverse patient populations (**Tan & Ong, 2002**).

### **Patient Perspectives:**

Incorporate qualitative data representing the voices of patients. Explore their lived experiences, perceptions of advocacy efforts, and the impact on their quality of life. Highlight areas for improvement and opportunities to empower patients within the healthcare system (**Brown, et al., (2020)**).

### **Implications for Policy and Practice:**

Discuss the broader implications of the findings for healthcare policy and practice. Offer recommendations for policy changes that support patient advocacy and contribute to a more patient-centered healthcare landscape. Provide actionable insights for healthcare organizations and professionals to implement in their daily practices (**Anderson et al. (2019)**).

The Findings section aims to present a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the relationship between patient advocacy, social determinants, and quality of life, with a focus on actionable insights for healthcare professionals and policymakers (**Chafey et al., 1998**).

### **Discussion:**

The relationship between patient advocacy, social determinants, and quality of life forms a critical nexus in the healthcare landscape. Patient advocacy, characterized by the proactive support of patients' rights and interests, is indispensable in addressing health disparities and promoting equitable access to quality healthcare. This discussion explores how understanding and addressing social determinants can enhance patient advocacy efforts and

contribute to an improved quality of life, ultimately fostering a more equitable and patient-centered healthcare system.

The social determinants of health, encompassing factors such as socioeconomic status, education, and community resources, significantly influence individuals' well-being. Addressing these determinants is integral to effective patient advocacy, as healthcare professionals need to recognize that patients' health extends beyond the clinical setting. Acknowledging and mitigating social determinants contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of patients' needs (**Jones, S., et al. (2019)**).

Effective patient advocacy goes beyond traditional healthcare roles. Healthcare professionals can empower patients by actively involving them in decision-making processes, considering their social context. By understanding the unique challenges patients face due to social determinants, advocates can tailor interventions that resonate with individual needs, thereby promoting a sense of empowerment.

Healthcare professionals play a pivotal role in contributing to more equitable healthcare systems. By advocating for policies that address social determinants, professionals can influence systemic changes. This may involve collaborating with policymakers to develop initiatives that reduce health disparities, ensuring that healthcare resources are distributed more fairly (**Johnson and Davis (2019)**).

The ultimate goal of patient advocacy, when considering social determinants, is to enhance the overall quality of life for individuals. This involves not only addressing immediate healthcare needs but also creating conditions that support long-term well-being, such as access to education, employment opportunities, and a safe living environment (**Thompson and Brown (2021)**).

## **Conclusion,**

The exploration of patient advocacy in this analysis contributes substantially to the enhancement of educational and managerial strategies within the nursing field. By identifying key attributes, antecedents, and consequences of patient advocacy, this conceptual analysis provides valuable insights for refining nursing practices, ultimately leading to improved safety and quality of patient care. In the broader context, the interplay between patient advocacy, social determinants, and quality of life necessitates a holistic and collaborative approach from healthcare professionals. Recognizing and addressing social determinants becomes foundational to achieving equitable, patient-centered care, making significant contributions to individual and community well-being. This discussion emphasizes the crucial role of an integrated and proactive healthcare system, extending beyond symptom treatment to address the root causes of health disparities. In conclusion, fostering patient advocacy is integral to advancing nursing practices and building a healthcare environment that prioritizes both individual and societal health.

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