



**EFNNMA statement on
Health Systems Stewardship
12TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 4-5 July 2008**



The European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations (EFNNMA) endorsed the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations (UN) principles that health is a basic human right and that equality of access to healthcare for all citizens requires necessary policy and legislation.

EFNNMA supports the WHO and the UN to call on all national governments and international bodies to review the stewardship and governance of health systems:

- **ACKNOWLEDGING** that good health system stewardship demands good regulation, accountability, transparency and vision and that investment in health systems is investment in wealth creation;
- **RECOGNIZING** that individual stewardship means engaging in continuous professional development, designing new roles and models of care, creating positive practice environments and ensuring self-regulation and maintaining practice standards;
- **BEING AWARE** that stewardship embodies notions of managing assets without owning them, anticipating future trends and devising plans;
- **HIGHLIGHTING** that the nursing and midwifery professions have vision, leadership and intelligence to influence the significant elements of stewardship and that public protection requires investment in leadership skills to further develop the roles of nurses and midwives;
- **CONSCIOUS** that nursing midwifery leaders need a solid foundation in health care economics and the social determinants of health and health outcomes to influence the national political system;
- **ESTABLISHING** that nurses and midwives are key players in influencing/developing/ensuring quality health care systems; and
- **RECOGNIZING** that continuous professional development is the key to creating positive practice environments.

URGES governments to:

- recognize their responsibility for the welfare of their population;
- appoint a government chief nurse/midwife at the Ministry of health;
- address recruitment and retention of appropriately qualified health care personnel; and
- inform the public about their rights, responsibilities and duties in relation to resources.

URGES organizations to address key issues and challenges:

- balance the competing influences and demands while building coalitions to achieve the main health system objectives;
- set clear policy priorities while maintaining an overview of societal interests;
- ensure the necessary regulation (of prices, the education of health care providers and professional practice, through licensing and accreditation, etc.); and
- encourage a climate of transparency and accountability, through performance assessment and the provision of intelligence.

and

ENCOURAGES nurses and midwives to:

- engage in individual stewardship through continuous professional development, designing new roles and models of care, creating positive practice environments and ensuring self-regulation and maintaining practice standards.



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EUROPE

“In the European Region the World Health Organization (WHO) has argued that equity in health requires policies and legislation to be aimed at implementing the United Nations provision on human rights. Its work on patients’ rights presupposes a system of basic human rights.” (1)

Introduction

The term “stewardship” can be defined in several ways and is closely linked with governance. This term might be a difficult concept to translate. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations have noted that to strengthen global health national governments and international bodies need to review the stewardship and governance of health systems.

“Stewardship and governance of nursing and midwifery services involve the government, civil society and the professions to ensure the quality of care” (2.) Nurses and midwives are key players in ensuring quality health care systems.

Stewardship

A broader concept than regulation, stewardship may be defined as the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care. The concept of stewardship can also be viewed as an ethically informed or good form of governance.

It involves influencing policies and actions in all the sectors that may affect population health (3):

The stewardship function therefore implies the ability to formulate strategic policy direction, to ensure good regulation; the tools for implementing it, and to provide the necessary intelligence on health system performance for accountability and transparency. Key issues and challenges include:

- balancing the many competing influences and demands while building coalitions to achieve the main health system objectives;
- setting clear policy priorities while maintaining an overview of societal interests;
- ensuring the necessary regulation (of prices, the education of health care providers and professional practice through licensing and accreditation, etc.);

- influencing the behaviour of the actors involved, in a climate of transparency and accountability, through performance assessment and the provision of intelligence.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “governance is defined as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country’s affairs at all levels” (4).

Stewardship is seen as a new way of bringing together an efficient and cost-effective organization and ethical based trust representation (5). This is based on focusing more on the personal development of the individual than on the behaviour of the organization as a whole.

The essential goal of all health systems is improved population health (6), by having responsive services underpinned by fair financing (7).

In the framework for health systems performance assessment three key aspects of stewardship are described (8):

1. Setting, implementing and monitoring the rules for the health system;
2. Assuring a level playing field among all actors in the system (particularly purchasers, providers and patients), and
3. Defining strategic directions for the health system as a whole

In order to apply these key factors stewardship can be divided into six sub functions:

- overall system design,
- performance assessment,
- priority setting,
- inter-sectoral advocacy,
- regulation,
- consumer protection.

The world health report 2000 states that stewardship is concerned with ensuring that government, organizations and individuals that compose the health system act as good stewards of the resources and trust given to their care (7). “To recognize the importance of stewardship is to ensure quality of care and safety of the public, especially patients. To do so requires meaningful regulatory mechanism especially in relation to the continued globalization of health care and the consequent migration of practitioners” (2).

Government

Saltman & Ferrousier-Davis identify health system stewardship as the “function of a government responsible for the welfare of the population and concerned about the trust and legitimacy with which its activities are viewed by the citizenry” (5). Fundamentally, stewardship is “about the role of the government in health and its relation to others whose activities impact on health” (9). Health system stewardship implies the ability to formulate strategic policy direction, to ensure good regulation; accountability,

transparency (10); public protection and investment in leadership skills development of nurses and midwives. It is therefore critical to have a government chief nurse or chief midwife in position in the Ministry. WHO also views stewardship in relation to health systems as effective trusteeship of national health (7). Recruitment and retention of appropriately qualified health care personnel is one of the challenges that government needs to address.

Cassels states that awareness and expectations of the general public regarding health service provision are also increasing at a time when many countries face staffing shortages, rising health care costs and limitation on financial resources (2). Informing the public about their rights, responsibilities and duties in relation to resources is a priority.

Organizations

Every organization, public or private, should have a shared interest and role in health system stewardship. Health care regulation is a key sub function as it sets the rules of engagement. Health care regulation applies to organizations charged with developing a functioning health system, financial, fair financing and resource development through standardized regulation, performance assessment and accreditation. Continuous professional development; new roles and models of care; creating positive practice environments; monitoring compliance with regulation and practice standards are key responsibilities for organizations.

Professional

Vision, leadership, intelligence and influence are significant elements of stewardship within the nursing and midwifery professions. These key functions of professional organizations and individuals are enhanced by partnerships with government and other stakeholders.

WHO recognizes that (2):

individually and collectively, health care practitioners have a major role to play in regulation of the profession and setting standards for care. As responsible and accountable stakeholders in the delivery of effective client care, health personnel – especially nurses and midwives – must acknowledge the forces that drive health care and become more involved in policy-making.

Individuals

Opportunities of stewardship

Stewardship in nursing and midwifery is dependent on good leadership at all levels. In terms of health care systems and service delivery this will require accommodation of the changing needs of the public, consumer and patient groups; ensuring cost-effective provision that individuals the family and society can afford. Individual stewardship means engaging in continuous professional development, designing new roles and models of care, creating positive practice environments and ensuring self-regulation and maintaining practice standards.

Conclusion

The aim of stewardship is to achieve a legacy which is as good as, if not better, than it was before. This requires service, a long-term vision and involves the transformational process of engaging others in solutions and actions (11). Stewardship embodies notions of managing assets without owning them, anticipating future trends and devising plans.

Stewardship is about changing health systems for the betterment of all. This transformational change will only occur if all parties engaged in health are involved in the process.

Nursing and midwifery leaders will need a solid foundation in health care economics, health care financing, statistical and financial analysis, determinants of health and health outcomes because stewardship of the health care system will require development of new metrics. Policy development, the need to develop new models of care delivery and the changing nature of the work of the nurse and midwife provides the ideal context for this stewardship.

Finally, stewardship is a duty for all: “the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care” (12).

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