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Strategic nurse leadership in public policy

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Background

Nurses are critical to the realisation of global ambitions for the improvement of population health. To fulfil this as a policy actor rather than implementer, there is a recognised need for nursing to strengthen its policy influence. Research on the conditions which enable or impede nursing policy influence at an international level is under-developed, and gave rise to the aims of the study:

1. Investigate strategic nurse leadership approaches, challenges and demonstrable contribution to public policy.

2. Co-construct a consensus statement exemplifying global perspectives on nurse leadership and policy influence.

Methods

A three round modified policy Delphi was used to construct a draft consensus statement on international strategic nurse leadership and public policy. The threshold for consensus was set at 67% (IQR ≤1). The first round of the Delphi was informed by a literature review and semi-structured interviews (n=8) with international nurse leaders. To promote rigour the consensus statement was explored in post-Delphi interviews with government nurses (n=10). Framework analysis was used to analyse the interview data.

Findings

The Delphi panel (n=40) comprised a diverse group of strategic nurse leaders from 32 countries with panellists from every world region, national income level and sector of nurse leadership. The emergent consensus statement offers prerequisites for and potential strategies to improve nursing's policy influence.

Conclusions

The current focus on nursing on the world stage provides an opportunity to accelerate nursing's policy influence. This study offers a consensus statement which identifies key elements which could support the expansion of the profession's strategic policy activity.