

Nov. 16, 2021

Policy Statement: Dissemination of Non-scientific and Misleading COVID-19 Information by Nurses

Purpose

To address the misinformation being disseminated about COVID-19 by nurses.

For the purposes of this statement, misinformation is defined as distorted facts, inaccurate or misleading information not grounded in the peer-reviewed scientific literature and counter to information being disseminated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Statement

Nurses are expected to be “prepared to practice from an evidence base; promote safe, quality patient care; use clinical/critical reasoning to address simple to complex situations; assume accountability for one’s own and delegated nursing care” (AACN, 2021).

SARS-CoV-2 is a potentially deadly virus. Providing misinformation to the public regarding masking, vaccines, medications and/or COVID-19 threatens public health. Misinformation, which is not grounded in science and is not supported by the CDC and FDA, can lead to illness, possibly death, and may prolong the pandemic. It is an expectation of the U.S. boards of nursing, the profession, and the public that nurses uphold the truth, the principles of the *Code of Ethics for Nurses* (ANA, 2015) and highest scientific standards when disseminating information about COVID-19 or any other health-related condition or situation.

When identifying themselves by their profession, nurses are professionally accountable for the information they provide to the public. Any nurse who violates their state nurse practice act or threatens the health and safety of the public through the dissemination of misleading or incorrect information pertaining to COVID-19, vaccines and associated treatment through verbal or written methods including social media may be disciplined by their board of nursing. Nurses are urged to recognize that dissemination of misinformation not only jeopardizes the health and well-being of the public, but may place their license and career in jeopardy as well.

References

- American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN). (2021). The Essentials: core competencies for professional nursing education. Retrieved from <https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/AcademicNursing/pdf/Essentials-2021.pdf>
- American Nurses Association. (2015). Code of Ethics for Nurses. Retrieved from <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/nursing-excellence/ethics/code-of-ethics-for-nurses/>

Endorsements

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| National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) | National League for Nursing (NLN) |
| Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) | NLN Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation (CNEA) |
| American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) | National Student Nurses’ Association (NSNA) |
| American Nurses Association (ANA) | Organization for Associate Degree Nursing (OADN) |
| American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) | |