Purpose: Social justice is not a new concept within the world of professional nursing. Over the past several decades, national nursing organizations (AACN, ICN, ANA) have written about the importance of professional nurse engagement in social justice issues within their individual practice in order to meet the needs of underserved patients. However, the nursing profession has not consistently defined social justice, leading to a disparity between the profession’s expectations and the capabilities of the practicing nurse. Nursing educators also face a challenge of adequately preparing nurses to engage in social justice acts due to the concept’s ambiguity and the limited time with which they are able to teach the concept and its application. The purpose of this poster is to shed light on this gap in nursing education and knowledge related to social justice.

Methods: A review of the literature was conducted within the PubMed and CINAHL databases. Articles from 2005 to present were considered. The key words social justice, nursing education, nursing, justice, and education were used in the literature search. Findings were analyzed and compiled to create a current state of social justice within nursing education.

Findings: Many current research articles regarding social justice indicate that nursing is lacking a clear call-to-action as well as an inconsistent definition of the concept of social justice. The call-to-action documents in nursing do not provide ample guidance for how nurses are to engage in social justice acts. Also, at a conceptual level, social justice in and of itself has yet to be consistently defined in nursing. With the inconsistent conceptualization of social justice within nursing, nurses cannot be expected to fully and accurately engage with social justice concepts within their nursing practice. Furthermore, nursing educators are being challenged to integrate the concepts of social justice within undergraduate and graduate education without having a concrete definition of the concept. Nursing instructors also are only provided one semester within which to teach this topic, resulting in graduate nurses entering practice without a concrete understanding of the concept and how to apply it in their practice. The ambiguity surrounding social justice in nursing precludes nurse educators and nurses from successfully teaching and engaging in care which best meets the needs of the underserved.

Conclusions: Social justice is a critical concept within nursing practice which needs to be better defined and conceptualized in order to facilitate nursing practice in the care of underserved populations. Governing bodies within nursing need to agree upon a unified conceptualization and definition of social justice. More importantly, nursing education needs to provide greater opportunity for students to learn, apply, and integrate social justice principles within their practice. By providing more time and opportunity for engagement with social justice principles, nurse educators can facilitate nursing student proficiency in implementing social justice principles and caring for the underserved.

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