



PEDIATRIC SPECIALTY NURSING ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Background: Professional organizations have a long and rich history of promoting leadership development since the late 1800s. Professional nursing organizations and associations advocate for the profession of nursing and nurses, develop health care policies and standards that ensure the highest level of patient care quality, assure the highest level of education, provide professional development and continuing education, and offer research, networking, and career advancement opportunities for their members. Currently there are 10 nationally based pediatric nursing specialty organizations and associations, most of which also have regional or local chapters.

Purpose: To use a scoping review to identify and summarize contributions of pediatric nursing organizations and associations in the United States to leadership development in pediatric nursing practice.

Results: Although there are leadership programs sponsored by professional nursing organizations and mentions of leadership in their mission and “about us” statements, there is very little empirical

evidence of the contributions that pediatric nursing specialty bodies make to the development of leaders.

Conclusions: Membership in a professional nursing organization provides nurses with professional development; continuing education including journal subscription and conference attendance; networking; opportunities for specialty certification, career advancement, and leadership development; and research-based clinical standards and guidelines that promote best practice. The relationship between membership in pediatric professional organizations and leadership is clear in mission statements and strategic plans. Nurse leaders play a key role in advancing the organization’s mission and goals. Nursing faculty, practice executives, and professional organizations and associations have an obligation to demonstrate value of membership in advancing the profession and developing future leaders. Future research is needed to describe the contributions of pediatric nursing professional organizations to leadership development of nurses.

Key words: Leadership; Pediatric nursing; Pediatric specialty associations; Professional associations; Societies.

Professional nursing groups include professional organizations and professional associations. The terms are often used interchangeably but often vary in scope. An organization tends to have formally well-defined authority, roles responsibilities, and functions, whereas an association is more likely to be a group of individuals with like interests (Abushaikh et al., 2021). Professional nursing organizations and associations have a long history of promoting leadership development of their members and exist at international and national levels. Most were established for and continue to work toward a variety of purposes including: advocating for the profession of nursing and nurses, developing health care policies and standards that ensure the highest level of patient care quality, assuring the highest level of education, providing professional development and continuing education, and providing research, networking, and career advancement opportunities for a collective body of nurse members (Catallo et al., 2014; Roux & Halstead, 2018).

According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2020), in the United States there are currently 177 professional nursing associations at the national level and 266 at the state level. The first U.S.-based professional nursing association was the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nursing that was established in 1893. It later became the National League for Nursing Education and now the National League for Nursing. According to the Institute of Pediatric Nursing (IPN, 2022), there are 10 nationally based pediatric nursing specialty organizations and associations and several other larger pediatric professional bodies that include pediatric nurses and physicians as members, such as the American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN), the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA), and Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA). Other professional bodies may include subsets of pediatric populations (newborns) as well, such as the National Association of Neonatal Nurses (NANN) and the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nursing (AWHONN). The purpose of this article is to present findings of a scoping review on contributions of U.S.-based pediatric nursing professional organizations and associations to leadership development in pediatric nursing practice.

Methods

Using the six-step approach to conducting a scoping review as per Levac et al. (2010), the research question was first identified: What are the contributions of U.S.-based pediatric nursing specialty professional bodies to leadership development in pediatric practice? This was followed by identification of

appropriate studies; identification of inclusion and exclusion criteria to select relevant studies; charting of the data; collating, summarizing, and reporting of the data; and consultation. Searches were conducted in CINAHL, MEDLINE, PubMed, and Scopus for articles written in English between 1988 and 2021 using the keywords *pediatric professional associations*, *pediatric professional organizations*, *professional development*, and *leadership development*. When no articles were found on pediatric nursing professional bodies, the search was broadened to include *professional associations*, *professional organizations*, *member benefits*, *professional development*, and *leadership development*. Websites of the 10 pediatric nursing specialty associations identified by the IPN (2022) were reviewed in depth.

From the database search, 968 articles were retrieved and screened. After excluding duplicates and articles that did not refer to professional nursing organizations or associations, 18 articles (empirical studies, essays or articles, reviews, book chapters) and the 10 websites were identified for inclusion in this scoping review. See Figure 1 for a flowchart of the process for selecting literature for the review. Each article was then reviewed for descriptors that included: type of article, population of interest, and key findings (Table 1). Each website was reviewed for descriptors that included foci for initiatives and examples of research, practice guidelines, and advocacy (Table 2).

FIGURE 1. FLOWCHART ILLUSTRATING THE SEARCH STRATEGY

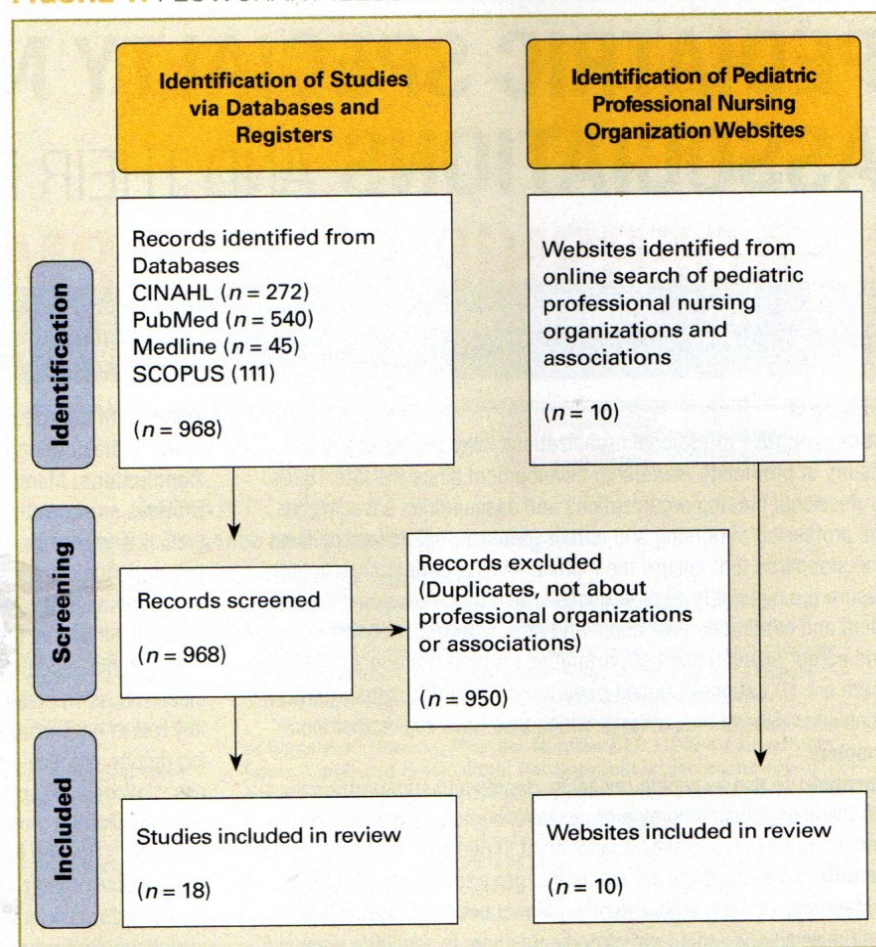


TABLE 1. LITERATURE INCLUDED IN THE REVIEW

First Author and Year of Publication	Type of Literature	Target Audience	Methodology	Key Findings
Abushaikh (2021)	Journal article	Women's health, obstetric, and neonatal nurses	Review of literature on historical review of the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN)	AWHONN has a rich history that will continue to grow to advance the health and well-being of women, mothers, babies, and families by empowering and supporting nurses through advocacy, continuing education, guidelines and standards, research, and career development
Akans (2013)	Journal article	Student Nurse Association (SNA) members and nursing faculty	SNA members' reflections on their participation	Key themes were leadership, mentorship, communication, professional development, acquisition of new knowledge and skill through SNA participation
Brancato (2011)	Newsletter article	Pennsylvania State Nurses Association (PSNA) members	Essay describing the importance of PSNA membership	Work of the PSNA and benefits to members include advocacy, political activities, recognition activities, educational activities, and leadership development activities
Carrier (2017)	Website article	Student members of Canadian Nurses Association (CAN)	Essay describing how the Canadian Student Nurses Association (CSNA) develops leadership in student nurses	Participation in CSNA's leadership development program can cultivate student leaders
Cline (2019)	Journal article	Oncology nurses	Essay describing the benefits of professional association membership	Benefits include certification, networking, professional publications, continuing education, practice standards, interprofessional perspectives, and leadership opportunities
Day (2014)	Journal article	Oncology nurses	Essay describing the leadership competency project of the Oncology Nurses Society (ONS)	Five domains of ONS leadership competencies described: vision, knowledge, interpersonal effectiveness, systems thinking, and personal mastery
Ferguson (2016)	Journal article	Nurses worldwide	An overview of the impact International Council of Nurses (ICN) Leadership for Change program nurse trainers and their colleagues have had in United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, and United States	The program has had significant impact on the leadership development of nurses on an international scale including improving health outcomes and health systems through practice, education, research, evidence-based health, and social and policy change
Gardner (2007)	Journal article	SNA members, students, faculty	Description of a mentor model that was incorporated in a leadership course and evaluated by students	Outcomes included increased enthusiasm for involvement in professional associations, an interest in becoming a mentor in the future, the importance of close personal communication in fostering relationships
Goolsby (2017)	Journal article	Nurse practitioners (NPs)	Description of personal benefits of professional organizational membership for NPs	Benefits of membership for NPs include role socialization, engagement networking, mentorship, advocacy, policy, leadership development, research dissemination, professional development, and volunteerism. Research is needed on factors influencing NP membership and associated benefits

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TABLE 1. LITERATURE INCLUDED IN THE REVIEW (*Continued*)

First Author and Year of Publication	Type of Literature	Target Audience	Methodology	Key Findings
Halstead (2018)	Book chapter	All nurses	Description of purposes, importance of mission match, member benefits, advocacy work, and professional development opportunities in professional nursing organizations	Types of professional nursing organizations Benefits of membership include advocacy, continuing education, networking, leadership development, resources for career advancement
Hart (1994)	Newsletter article	Gastroenterological nurses	Description of leadership theories, traits, styles	Leadership can be learned, leadership is challenging, leadership skills can be applied in professional nursing associations and health care settings
Igoe (2000)	Journal article	School nurses	Description of current leadership trends and their implications for school nursing	Development of leadership skills and competence including legal, ethical, and financial issues
Redding (2002)	Journal article	All nurses	Description of a consortium of 11 nursing organizations focused on promoting professional nursing leadership of all nurses in diverse practice settings	The power of networking
Shekleton (2010)	Journal article	Nurse anesthetists	Description of a needs assessment (survey and interviews) by the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (ANAA) of the philosophy of and need for leadership development across the organization	Leadership Development Boot Camp was developed because of assessment of members
Snively (2006)	Journal article	Oncology nurses	Reflections of ONS leaders on the power of leadership and professional development	Advancing oncology nursing and nurses through the power of the association
Sportsman (2010)	Journal article	All nurses	Description of the Texas Nurses Association (TNA) Emerging Leaders Program as an approach to engaging new nurses in leadership roles in TNA	The importance of building new nurse leaders and a replicable program for other state associations
Stein (2001)	Journal article	All nurses	Qualitative research that explored the informal learning and changes experienced by 20 members as they advanced in leadership roles in a critical care nurses' chapter	Outcomes include increased self-confidence; informal learning and mentoring can be enhanced by a formal buddy system, formal continuing education, and commitment of the professional organization to develop leaders
Truant (2017)	Journal article	Canadian oncology nurses	The president of the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology reflects on leadership quality and its role in developing new leaders	Strong association governance is critical to leadership development

TABLE 2. SELECTED EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES OF PEDIATRIC SPECIALTY ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS FOR 2021-22

Organization or Association	Examples of Foci for Initiatives	Examples of Recent Research and Sponsored Journals	Examples of Guidelines and Certification Programs	Examples of Advocacy
IPN	Education task force Health issues task force Professional development	Pediatric nurse residency programs Undergraduate pediatric education Partnerships with school nurses	Pediatric Nursing Certification Board Resources for educators, students, practicing nurses, and families	Securing the future of child health Choosing Wisely Campaign Campaign for Pediatric Nursing IPN newsletter <i>Pulse</i>
SPN	Diversity, equity, and inclusion Evidence-based guidance Professional development Policy and legislation	<i>Journal of Pediatric Nursing</i>	Pediatric Nursing Certification Breastfeeding <i>Pediatric Nursing Scope and Standards</i> Multiple clinical resource guidelines and toolkits: Quality palliative care Management of concussion Chronic conditions	Access to healthcare- Childhood vaccinations Healthy neighborhoods Gun violence
NAPNAP	Policy and legislation Continuing education Special interest groups	<i>Journal of Pediatric Health Care</i> Research agenda includes clinical care, health behaviors, physical environment, mental health, pediatric workforce	Position papers <i>Pediatric Nursing Scope and Standards</i> Special health care needs Effects of climate change Obesity	Health policy agenda Child Health Learning Collaborative <i>Inside the Beltway</i> Capitol Hill visits
PENS	Commitment to education and research Continuing education Career center	Grant funding <i>Journal of Pediatric Nursing</i>	Linear growth measurement Transgender youth bullying prevention	Clinical standards Clinical expertise Recognition of excellence
SPCN	Networking Continuing education	None reported	Three guidelines on congenital heart disease across lifespan	None reported
APGNN	Promotion of research and publication Promotion of education Standards of practice Networking Professional development	Recent publications on anxiety, emotional eating, boredom, and sleep in obesity Management of patients with short bowel syndrome	<i>APGNN Clinical Handbook 3rd ed</i> Certificate in Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition Nursing	None reported
AFPNP	Interdisciplinary education of PNPS Continuing education Recognition	None reported	Access to multiple association guidelines	None reported
APSNA	Continuing education Collaboration Mentorship Leadership	<i>Journal of Pediatric Surgery Nursing</i>	Standardized Toolbox of Education for Pediatric Surgery	Pediatric surgical NP competency development

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TABLE 2. SELECTED EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES OF PEDIATRIC SPECIALTY ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS FOR 2021-22 (CONTINUED)

Organization or Association	Examples of Foci for Initiatives	Examples of Recent Research and Sponsored Journals	Examples of Guidelines and Certification Programs	Examples of Advocacy
NASN	Advancing the practice of school nursing Health, education, and social equity Foundational school health evidence	<i>NASN School Nurse Journal of School Nursing</i> The NASN Sage Research Center School Nurse Survey Priorities include mental health, vaccine hesitancy, absenteeism, substance abuse, management of toxicological emergencies in schools	Toolkits on vaping, medication administration, nurse-led case management, naloxone, improving care coordination for students with chronic conditions	Advocacy Skill Building American Rescue Plan Virtual Hill visits Building health equity
APHON	Leadership and expertise Professional development Certifications	<i>Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing</i>	Side effects of treatment of childhood cancers Care management	<i>Advocacy correspondent</i> Continuing Education Center

Note. Institute of Pediatric Nursing (IPN); Society of Pediatric Nursing (SPN); National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP); The Pediatric Endocrinology Nursing Society (PENS); The Society of Pediatric Cardiovascular Nurses (SPCN); The Association of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition Nurses (APGNN); The Association of Faculties of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (AFPNP); The American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association (APSNA); The National Association of School Nurses (NASN); The Association of Pediatric-Hematology-Oncology Nurses (APHON).

Results

Literature Review

Most of the 18 articles included in the scoping review were essays describing initiatives or programs of professional nursing organizations or associations that develop nurse leaders. Three were written in state nurses' association newsletters and eight by representatives of professional nursing organizations or associations. One article was an historical review of AWHONN, one a qualitative study of professional association members, and the remainder on a variety of related topics to the review. None of the articles screened included a focus on pediatric nursing specialty organizations or associations.

Themes and Subthemes

In general, the overarching theme from the analysis of the literature is: *Professional nursing organizations and associations empower and support nurses to become leaders.* Subthemes include: 1) *Impact of leadership on the professional organization or association level improves health outcomes and health care systems;* 2) *Specialty practice can be enhanced by the power of the organization;* 3) *Many benefits to professional organization or association membership;* 4) *Leadership can be learned;* and 5) *Outcomes of participation in a professional organization or association leadership development program are extensive.*

Impact of Leadership on the Professional Organization or Association Level Improves Health Outcomes and Health Care Systems

Abushaikh et al. (2021) described how AWHONN's rich history has advanced the health and well-being of women, mothers, babies, and families by empowering and supporting nurses through advocacy, continuing education, guidelines and standards, research, and career development. Ferguson et al. (2016) described how the ICN Leadership for Change program improved health outcomes and health systems through practice, education, research, evidence-based health, and social and policy change.

Specialty Practice Can Be Enhanced by the Power of the Organization

Redding and Anglin (2002) spoke of the power of an 11-member professional consortium that enhanced networking opportunities among nurses from a variety of diverse health care settings. Reflections of nurse leaders explicitly highlight the power of the organization to improve health care outcomes (Snively & Rieger, 2016) and the importance of strong association governance in the development of nurse leaders (Truant & Chan, 2017).

Many Benefits to Professional Organization or Association Membership

Benefits include participation in advocacy and political activities (Brancato, 2011; Goolsby & DuBois, 2017;

Halstead, 2018); continuing education (Brancato, 2011; Cline et al., 2019; Halstead, 2018); certification (Cline et al., 2019); networking (Cline et al., 2019; Goolsby & DuBois, 2017); mentorship (Goolsby & DuBois, 2017); increased knowledge through access to the latest cutting-edge research and to practice standards and guidelines (Cline et al., 2019; Day et al., 2014; Goolsby & DuBois, 2017); professional development and career advancement (Brancato, 2011; Goolsby & DuBois, 2017; Halstead, 2018); and leadership development (Abushaikha et al., 2021; Day et al., 2014; Ferguson et al., 2016).

Leadership Can Be Learned

In 1994, Hart wrote an essay in *The Gastroenterological Nursing Newsletter* that identified current leadership theories, traits, and styles and concluded that leadership can be learned and should and can be applied in professional association and health care settings. Four articles included in this scoping review described leadership development programs for association members (Igoe, 2000; Shekleton et al., 2010; Sportsman et al., 2010; Seein, 2001). Three similar articles described learning experiences for student nurses (Akans et al., 2013; Carrier & Duncan, 2017; Gardner & Schmidt, 2007). Gardner and Schmidt (2007) described a partnership between a student nurse association and a school of nursing leadership course.

Outcomes of Participation in a Professional Organization or Association Leadership Development Program are Extensive

Outcomes of participating in a leadership development program conducted by a professional nursing body are similar whether student or member focused. Outcomes, similar to benefits of membership, include access to research, practice guidelines, and mentors that increase knowledge and enhance skill development; increased sense of self-confidence and mastery; and opportunities to advance as a leader within the association/organization. For students, Gardner and Schmidt (2007) found that participation in a school nursing association partnered mentor model increased enthusiasm for nursing and involvement in professional association work and for becoming a mentor in the future.

Website Review of Pediatric Nursing Specialty Professional Organizations and Associations

Review of the websites of the 10 pediatric nursing organizations and associations support the themes from the more general review of scoped literature. It is clear from these websites that pediatric specialty organizations and associations support nurses to become leaders through the many benefits of membership including leadership development, professional development and continuing education, mentoring, and networking. Impact on practice is best assessed through the research and advocacy initiatives, the development of standards and guidelines, and recognitions of excellence.

Institute of Pediatric Nursing (IPN)

Institute of Pediatric Nursing was established in 2009 by the Pediatric Nursing Certification Board (PNCB) and exists as a board committee of PNCB. Membership is free and open to nurses, educators, students, and families. Their mission is to “optimize the health and well-being of children, youth, and their families through the development of a sustainable, highly qualified pediatric nursing workforce” (IPN, 2022, p. 1). Major strategic priorities include: The Campaign for Pediatric Nursing that “promotes awareness of the pediatric specialty to students, educators, and the public” and Choosing Wisely that “promotes informed patient-provider dialogue about appropriate healthcare treatments and tests for families and health care providers” (IPN, 2022).

Society of Pediatric Nursing (SPN)

Society of Pediatric Nursing was established in 1990 under the leadership of Dr. Cecily Betz, Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Pediatric Nursing*. “The mission of the SPN is to advance the specialty of pediatric nursing through excellence in education, research, and practice” (SPN, 2022, p. 1). The society’s vision is “to be the premier professional organization and resource for all nurses caring for children and their families” (SPN, 2022, p. 1).

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP)

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners was established in 1973 as the first professional association for nurse practitioners. It is the only professional association with dual goals to advance the role of nurse practitioners and improving quality of care for children. Its members predominantly are nurse practitioners and pediatric-focused advanced practice nurses. The mission of NAPNAP is “to empower pediatric-focused advanced practice registered nurses and key partners to optimize child and family health” (NAPNAP, 2022, p. 1).

Pediatric Endocrinology Nursing Society (PENS)

Pediatric Endocrinology Nursing Society was established in 1986 by a small group of endocrine research study coordinators with the goal of developing a network of pediatric endocrine nursing professionals. According to the PENS website (2022, p. 1), the society is “committed to the development and advancement of nurses in the art and science of caring for children with endocrine disorders and diabetes.” Strategic priorities include: the development of practice standards, advancement of clinical and research expertise, and the promotion of excellence to empower nurses to provide quality care to children with endocrine disorders.

Society of Pediatric Cardiovascular Nurses (SPCN)

Society of Pediatric Cardiovascular Nurses is an internationally based professional association that was established in 1985 with members from the United States and 11 other countries. Its mission is to “share ideas and resources, discuss the care and complications in the treatment of

Professional nursing organizations have a long history of promoting leadership development since the late 1800s.

acquired and congenital heart disease, and collaborate in nursing research which addresses our patients and families with congenital and acquired heart disease from fetal diagnosis into adulthood” (SPCN, 2022, p. 1).

Association of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition Nurses (APGNN)

Association of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition Nurses was established in 1989 with the mission to “promote nursing research and education in pediatric gastroenterology and nutrition, establish standards of practice and create a network of like-minded professionals to support their professional development” (APGNN, 2022, p. 1). Members include nurses, physician assistants, dietitians, and social workers from the United States and Canada who remain committed leaders in the field.

Association of Faculties of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (AFPNP)

Association of Faculties of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners was established in 1972 at the University of Connecticut School of Nursing by pediatric nurse practitioner faculty who saw a need to develop curriculum guidelines for pediatric nurse practitioner education. The group grew and has been meeting annually at the NAPNAP conference since 1978. Its mission is to “foster quality interdisciplinary education of pediatric nurse practitioners” (AFPNP, 2022, p. 1). Members include nurse educators who teach in pediatric, school, and family nurse practitioner programs.

American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association, INC (APSNA)

American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association was established in 1992 with a mission to be the “voice that shapes pediatric surgical nursing through advocacy, collaboration, mentorship and leadership” and a goal to be the leading authority for this specialty (APSNA, 2022, p. 1). Members include clinicians, researchers, mentors, educators, advocates, and administrators in the specialty of pediatric surgical nursing

National Association of School Nurses (NASN)

National Association of School Nurses was established in 1968 by the National Education Association as the Department of School Nurses with the goal of improving the quality of school nursing and the establishment of school nurse credentialing standards for all states. In 1974 following President Gerald Ford’s proclamation of National School Nurse Day, the NASN was formally renamed. Its

mission has remained consistent; “to optimize student health and learning by advancing the practice of school nursing” (NASN, 2022, p. 1). Core values include child well-being, ethics, innovation, leadership, and diversity/equity (NASN, 2022).

Association of Pediatric-Hematology-Oncology Nurses (APHON)

Association of Pediatric-Hematology-Oncology Nurses was initially established in 1976 as the Association of Oncology Nurses (APON) and in 2006 was renamed to APHON. Members are primarily nurses but also include other allied health practitioners/leaders. Its mission is “to support and advance nurses in optimizing outcomes for children, adolescents, young adults, and their families throughout the continuum of care for their blood disorders and cancers” (APHON, 2022, p. 1).

Limitations

The major limitation of this scoping review is that no literature was found that addressed the contributions of U.S.-based pediatric nursing specialty professional bodies to leadership development in pediatric specialty practice. When the search was broadened to the contributions of professional nursing associations to leadership development, the final number of articles that met the inclusion criteria was 18 and only one of these articles was research-based. Data obtained from the 10 websites may be outdated although currently posted. The relationship between pediatric specialty organizations and associations and leadership development can only be implicitly drawn from the website review. Further research is critical to answer the research question posed in this scoping review.

Implications for the Profession

Although the nursing research literature is silent on this topic, the relationship between membership in professional organizations and associations and leadership development is clear in mission statements and strategic plans. All pediatric nursing specialty organizations and associations included in this scoping review advocate for advancement of nurses and nursing in their specialty fields. Nurse leaders in any specialty are pivotal in achieving the mission and goals of each professional nursing association/organization. Based on the limited literature review, it may be concluded that most professional nursing associations, including those dedicated to pediatric nursing either implicitly or explicitly focus on the critical importance of the role of nurses as leaders to advance their missions and strategic goals.

In the 2010 *Future of Nursing Report*, the Institute of Medicine (2010, p. 14) specifically recommended that nursing associations along with nurses, and nursing education programs “should prepare the nursing workforce to assume leadership positions across all levels....” This is accomplished through professional development and continuing education, access, and use of evidence-based resources to guide practice and mentoring and

NURSING IMPLICATIONS

- Future research is needed to empirically describe the contributions of pediatric nursing professional bodies to the leadership development of their members.
- Nurse educators need to consistently encourage the benefits of professional association membership.
- Schools of nursing should belong to the Student Nurses Association and support opportunities for student leadership.
- Nurse educators should highlight evidence-based association standards and guideline for practice.
- Employers should expect that individual nurses will develop as leaders and showcase the opportunities for association involvement and leadership competency development.
- Employers should support (through reimbursement and time-off) individual nurse involvement in professional association work.
- Employers should showcase the work of nurse leaders in professional associations.
- Professional associations need to demonstrate value of membership in advancing the profession and developing future leaders.
- Leadership development needs to continue to be a hallmark benefit of association membership.

encouragement to assume leadership positions. Most professional associations were established with the intent to provide networking and professional development opportunities for nurses with a specific specialty focus and the missions and strategic plans of today remain true to this intent. Although the 2020 to 2030 *Future of Nursing Report* (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2021, p. 4) is less explicit in its focus on leadership and the role of professional associations, it is clear that “nurses have a critical role to play in achieving the goal of health equity, [and that] they need robust education, supportive work environments, and autonomy” to do so.

Membership in a professional nursing organization or association provides nurses with professional development; continuing education including journal subscription and conference attendance; networking; opportunities for specialty certification, career advancement, and leadership development; and research-based practice standards and guidelines that promote best practice (Halstead, 2018; Matthews, 2012). Strategies to encourage individual nurse’s membership in professional nursing associations must start during formative education. Nursing faculty need to educate and show the value of membership to their students. Requiring use of evidence-based practice

is essential and highlighting evidence the frames standards and guidelines developed by professional associations is critical. Highlighting the work of professional association sponsored guidelines, nurse staffing standards, research, and initiatives during formative and graduate education is an effective approach to assist students in valuing membership for themselves. Practice organizations can be pivotal in encouraging association membership by building leadership development into practice expectations for career advancement. Professional associations that provide journal subscriptions and conference offerings are tangible benefits to leadership development. Often committee membership at the institutional level is a steppingstone to association volunteerism and task force or committee membership. Nurse executives need to showcase their nursing leaders who are key players in professional association work as mentors and role models to more novice nurses. Professional associations must continue to work to expand and diversify their membership by making membership benefits clear and enticing. Nurses have a vast array of opportunities to become involved in professional associations that pique their interest and in turn develop leadership competencies (Halstead, 2018).

In conclusion, the mission and key initiatives of each of the 10 pediatric nursing professional associations reviewed have a focus on professional development that in turn can prepare leaders to advance the mission and goals of each professional nursing association. Leaders in academia and clinical practice as well as the professional organizations and associations have an obligation to demonstrate value of membership in advancing the profession and developing future leaders. Future research must be conducted to study the contributions of all professional nursing organizations including pediatric specialty nursing organizations and associations to the leadership development of their members. ✦

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The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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