Over the past 15 years, there has been a growing call for nurses to be placed on boards of hospitals and health systems. Rationale for this action includes the changing nature of health care; a greater emphasis on person and family-centered care; nurses’ background and experience in health care delivery; and that boards with a more diverse composition are associated with better organizational performance. Several national organizations have come forward to support this, among them the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, American Hospital Association, the Institute of Medicine, and several industry leaders in health care. While progress has been made, however, nurses still occupy only 4% of board seats. This article reviews some of the myths and barriers that have prevented nurses from serving on boards, as well as offering 3 major recommendations for action that reflect not only long-term efforts but also short-term activism.

Discussion Questions:

1. Disch and Kingston present several reasons that nurses should be appointed to healthcare system boards. How would you construct a case for appointing a nurse to your healthcare system board?

2. As a nurse leader with an interest in serving on a healthcare system board, you need to develop a strategy. An important factor in being selected to serve is board experience. How could you develop board experience to qualify you as a viable candidate for your healthcare system board?

3. The authors note that knowing how to serve on boards is insufficient to be selected as a board member. What other strategies should you include in your plan to be appointed to healthcare system board?

4. As a senior nurse leader, how can you help a nurse colleague get appointed to your healthcare system’s board?