

# How to Engage in Health Care Policy Advocacy as a Physician

Together, We Can Eliminate Cervical Cancer



## A 10-Step Practical Guide

Clinicians are uniquely positioned to influence health policy because they combine clinical expertise, real patient experience, and strong public trust. This guide explains how clinicians can effectively participate in policy-facing advocacy, both individually and collectively, to help shape practical, ethical, and patient-centered health systems.

### Understanding the Advocacy Levels

Policy-facing advocacy primarily occurs at the macro level but is strengthened by insights from the micro and meso levels. Clinicians are strong advocates as they operate across the three interconnected levels:

- Micro – individual patient advocacy
- Meso – Institutional and systems improvement
- Macro – Public policy and legislation

### Why Clinician Advocacy Matters

Policies are more effective when clinicians are involved because they:

- Improve policy feasibility and relevance
- Increase public credibility and trust
- Reduce implementation failure
- Align policy decisions with real patient needs

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### Step 1: Translate Clinical Experience Into Policy Insight

Use your frontline experience to help policymakers understand how policies work in real life.

#### How to do this:

- Identify gaps between policy intentions and clinical reality.
- Document unintended consequences such as access barriers or administrative burden.
- Share anonymized case examples that illustrate systemic problems.
- Bring forward the perspectives of patients and people with lived experience.

⇒ **Goal:** Turn everyday clinical observations into actionable policy knowledge.

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## Step 2: Interpret and Communicate Scientific Evidence

Help bridge the gap between research and legislation.

### How to do this:

- Explain medical evidence in clear, non-technical language.
- Clarify risks, benefits, and feasibility of proposed interventions.
- Address misinformation using clinical data and evidence.
- Contribute to guideline development and implementation discussions.

⇒ **Goal:** Act as a translator of knowledge, making science usable for decision-makers.

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## Step 3: Advocate for Patients at the Population Level

Expand advocacy beyond individual patients to communities and health systems.

### How to do this:

- Promote equitable access to care.
- Address social determinants of health.
- Represent underserved or vulnerable populations.
- Support prevention and public health initiatives.

⇒ **Goal:** Ensure policies prioritize patient welfare over political or commercial interests.

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## Step 4: Participate in Policy Development

Engage directly in policymaking processes.

### How to do this:

- Serve on advisory panels or expert committees.
- Join professional association policy groups.
- Help draft regulations, legislation, or clinical standards.
- Review and provide feedback on proposed reforms.

⇒ **Goal:** Improve policy feasibility and implementation success.

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## Step 5: Build Public Understanding and Trust

Use your trusted professional voice to improve public understanding of health policy.

### How to do this:

- Write opinion pieces or public statements.
- Engage responsibly with medical journalists and media outlets.
- Explain health policies in accessible terms.
- Support evidence-based public health messaging.

⇒ **Goal:** Strengthen public confidence in health decisions and policies.

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## Step 6: Support Policy Implementation and System Improvement

Policies succeed only when they work in practice.

### How to do this:

- Help design practical care pathways aligned with policy goals.
- Lead quality improvement initiatives.
- Provide feedback to policymakers about implementation challenges.
- Identify operational barriers early and involve patients in solutions.

⇒ **Goal:** Make policies operationally realistic and sustainable.

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## Step 7: Engage in Collective and Institutional Advocacy

Work through organizations to amplify impact.

### How to do this:

- Participate in medical societies or specialty organizations.
- Take leadership roles within healthcare institutions.
- Collaborate in interprofessional coalitions.
- Partner with public health groups, civil society organizations, and patient advocates.

⇒ **Goal:** Increase credibility and influence through coordinated action.

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## Step 8: Provide Ethical Stewardship

Ensure policies align with core medical ethics.

### How to do this:

- Raise concerns about equity and justice.
- Protect patient autonomy.
- Advocate for fair resource allocation.
- Identify conflicts of interest.
- Promote harm-reduction approaches when appropriate.

⇒ **Goal:** Maintain ethical integrity in policy decisions involving trade-offs.

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## Step 9: Promote Health Equity and Social Justice

Address structural inequities within healthcare systems.

### How to do this:

- Document disparities in health outcomes.
- Advocate for structural reforms.
- Support culturally competent care policies.
- Encourage inclusive health system design.

⇒ **Goal:** Reduce inequities and improve outcomes across populations.

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## Step 10: Advocate for the Healthcare Workforce

Support policies that strengthen the workforce and indirectly improve patient care.

### How to do this:

- Contribute to discussions on training standards and residency structures.
- Advocate for solutions to workforce shortages and burnout.
- Engage in scope-of-practice debates.
- Support safe staffing policies.

⇒ **Goal:** Build sustainable systems that enable high-quality care.

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## Advocacy engagement tools to open the dialogue with policymakers

- Policy brief
- White paper
- Elimination Planning Tool for national model
- Working with testimonies by people with lived experience (survivors, screening experiences)
- Cervical cancer elimination roundtables for dialogues with policymakers

## Toolkits to get inspired

Build your own knowledge and confidence in the pathway to cervical cancer elimination by reading the seminal papers for each pillar of HPV vaccination, HPV screening and treatment of precancerous lesions and early detection and treatment of invasive cervical cancer as well as cross-cutting elements to support comprehensive and integration programs.

[IGCS ACCESS Initiative Landing Page](#)

[Recommended Reading – Key Publications](#)

[ICCP Map of Elimination Strategies](#)

[Comprehensive Resource Hub Hosted on ICCP](#)

### **The SMART Advocacy**

A toolkit that guides you through developing an advocacy campaign across three phases. It shows you how to convince the people with power that taking action will achieve their goals and yours. By the end of the process, you will have an evidence-driven strategy that you can take forward confidently. Whether you are a seasoned advocate or a beginner this tool, designed for easy adaptation to any setting or topic area, will strengthen your work and produce results.

[Click to access.](#)

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### **2024 WHO toolkit**

A toolkit aiming to put healthcare workers in the spotlight and engage them in promoting national cervical cancer elimination.

[Click to access.](#)

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### **2023 UNICEF procurement toolkit**

The Cervical Cancer Toolkit approaches cervical cancer in a comprehensive way, providing supply solutions for prevention, diagnosis and treatment. This supports health programmes making progress towards elimination in a sustainable, effective and cost-efficient way.

[Click to access.](#)

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### **The Cervical Cancer Elimination Planning Tool**

The Cervical Cancer Elimination Planning Tool aims to enable countries to create effective, sustainable cervical cancer strategies that are specifically adapted to their unique demographic and health-care needs. By assisting advocates or policy-makers in planning, costing, and tailoring their cervical cancer programmes across the three pillars of the WHO global strategy – the EPT aims to support countries to plan their bespoke roadmap towards elimination.

[Click to access.](#)

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### **Ireland – Cervical Cancer Elimination Partnership Toolkit**

A public-facing toolkit to educate and engage communities on getting involved in the ambition to eliminate cervical cancer in Ireland by the year 2040.

[Click to access.](#)

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### **IGCS Preinvasive Disease Certificate Program**

The IGCS Preinvasive Disease Program, provides comprehensive education and hands-on training for healthcare professionals to detect, diagnose, and manage preinvasive cervical and lower genital tract disease. It aims to prevent cervical cancer globally through online courses, mentorship, and practical skill development.

[Click to learn more.](#)