Examining Social Determinants of Health in Syrian Refugees Using Simulation

Jeri J. Whitfield, RN, BSN, MDiv & Rebecca L Meyer RN, BSN, MSN, PhD
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Innovative Strategy

- Evidence-based educational strategies were used in an undergraduate transcultural course to increase awareness of social determinants of health.
- Students were able to analyze potential barriers to healthcare, including cultural bias related to cultural beliefs and practices.
- The use of low fidelity simulation helped students explore a global perspective of healthcare needs in a safe setting.

Objectives

- Explain the potential impact personal cultural bias (ethnocentrism) of the nurse may have on healthcare delivery for vulnerable populations and identify ways an understanding of ethnicity, beliefs, values, religion, and language may result in decreasing health disparities.
- Describe the economic and social factors, such as health, income, housing, and employment and their effect on vulnerable immigrant families.
- Analyze potential barriers to accessing healthcare in the US for Arab families related to their cultural health beliefs and health practices.

Significance

- Creating social environments that promote good health for all individuals, families, and communities, no matter their culture, is an important part of the national and international health agenda.
- The United Nations has identified 17 goals to address health disparities worldwide, such as poverty, hunger, and well-being, to name a few (UN, 2017).
- Since thousands of people are fleeing war torn countries and immigrating to the United States, issues such as hunger and poverty have become even more prevalent.
- It is important to educate future nurses about the ways they can make a difference in the health disparities of these displaced people while considering their cultures, religions, customs, values, and beliefs.

Literature

- The American Association of Colleges of Nursing has a toolkit for baccalaureate programs with relevant cultural competencies.
- Some of the competencies include understanding social factors that affect healthcare, promoting outcomes for diverse populations, and advocating for social justice (AACN, 2008).
- Educational strategies in baccalaureate programs need to target knowledge, skills, and affective learning related to culture and the social determinants of health in a creative and relevant way to enable students to see the connection between what they are learning and their future nursing practice.

Methods

- An evidence-based simulation scenario was developed to examine social determinants of health in Syrian refugees.
- Students learned about the health concerns experienced by this population by entering into the roles of a Syrian family, with the men becoming the leader of the family unit, and women having to wear a head covering.
- The unfolding scenario included family members having to decide what 3 important items they would take with them if they had to flee their country.
- Each family unit went to immigration and had to pay to leave the country and then were told which country would accept them.
- According to the literature, learning occurs in debriefing, so in-depth debriefing was conducted after the simulation.

Findings

- An increased cultural awareness was identified by the students who participated and they were significantly impacted.
- They were able to articulate their thoughts and feelings about the experience, as well as potential bias they may have had prior to the simulation.
- Students reported an increased awareness of the difficulties faced by those who are forced to leave their countries behind and immigrate to a new home while trying to maintain their cultural practices.
- Simulation was seen as a valuable tool which helped students synthesize theoretical, practical, ethical, and scientific knowledge to improve healthcare outcomes locally, nationally, and globally.

Implications

- Professional nurses need to be aware of differing worldviews and cultures in order to provide the best possible care to patients and their families.
- Health disparities faced by those who may not have the resources to access care is a continuing discussion at the national level.
- This simulation demonstrated the effectiveness of using creative, evidence-based strategies to address health disparities, increase cultural awareness in nursing students, and could be replicated in other baccalaureate programs.
- Future research could focus on the long-term benefits of such training in minimizing stereotyping and prejudice in nursing care so that nurses can make a difference for patients from all cultures.

References