Cultural Diversity/ Health Disparity

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Health disparity and cultural diversity are seen in today’s society healthcare system. Disparities are often perceived in racial and ethical lines, but they are also appreciated with income and education (Kosoko-Lasaki, Cook, & O’Brien, 2009). Health disparities are defined as the frequency, predominance, and mortality of diseases and other adverse health conditions that are present among specific groups in the country (Kosoko-Lasaki, Cook, & O’Brien, 2009). Many factors contribute to health disparities such as education, insurance status, segregation, immigration status, lifestyle, health behavior, and healthcare provider behavior. The United States is becoming more multicultural and it is expected the groups that experience poor health status will increase (Pamies & Nsiah-Kumi, 2009). The barriers to accessing health services lead to unmet health needs, interruptions in receiving proper care, failure to get preventive services, and hospitalization that could have been prevented (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011).

Community assessment

The community of interest within this health-focused community assessment is the Wiregrass Adult Care Center in Dothan Alabama. This facility is located just off the Ross Clark Circle behind the Wiregrass Rehab Center in Houston County. The Wiregrass Adult Care Center provides a comfortable, safe, and stimulating atmosphere. Supervision and personalized care are provided while preserving dignity of the participants. Important staff qualities provided to the clients is kindness, caring, and patience.

The Wiregrass Adult Care Program serves individuals who need more attention than traditional programs provide. The goal is to reduce institutional care and provide respite for caregivers or loved ones. The clients enrolled at the center are ages 19 and up. Currently
attending the Wiregrass Adult Care Center are 18 whites and 30 blacks. The gender percentage in the community is 60% female and 40% male. A majority of the clients that attend the center are widowed and the other percent are younger in age and have never been married, there is a small 10% that are married. Within the community about 40% have a high school education. Of the participants in the center 30% have children. The predominant language spoken by the clients at the center is English. The health needs of this population are diverse and unique. Diagnosis affecting this population range from mental disabilities, Down Syndrome, head injuries, schizophrenia, diabetes, and Alzheimer’s disease. Each individual has to meet qualifications to become participants of the program. The program is funded by state agencies or private pay individuals (M. L. Meadows, personal communication, July 4, 2011).

Factors affecting overall health

The program is committed to serving participants with care and support. The structured and comprehensive program improves the social and physical health of individuals. The factors affecting the overall health of this community that encourage participation are as follows. The program provides services for adults who are alone or isolated in need of socialization. Each client is welcomed with warm smiles and words to form lasting bonds and impressions. Some of the participants are in need of supervision and others need activities and care after a recent medical event. The participants are in need of assistance due to physical impairment and interaction with caring and professional staff. Some of the clients are diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease or a dementia-related illness. The illnesses affecting this community are diverse in their needs but have similar aspects that can be met by attending this facility daily. These individuals receive unique and appropriate care for each contributing factor affecting this population of interest.
Strategies

The Wiregrass Adult Care Center provides several clinical prevention and health promotion opportunities. In improving clinical care, the center offers physical assessments of all the clients once a month. The registered nurse checks the client’s vital signs and educates them about the nutritional needs for each individual. If a problem presents with any of the clients, the nurse talks with the caregivers about the problem. These are two key health promotion aspects offered at the center. Another strategy that ensures client safety and care, is the transportation provided to the clients daily. The center transports each client to the facility and home each day. The center also transports the clients on field trips occasionally. This accessibility ensures safer delivery of care for patients that are in need.

The Wiregrass Adult Care Center also offers strategies to improve health promotion and disease prevention. The center provides each client with two meals per day and a snack. These meals are approved by the Child Nutrition Program with the State of Alabama. The meals are prepared by a catering service and sent to the center daily. This ensures patients receive appropriate dietary needs that meet their specific suggested requirements.

Another aspect of improving health promotion and disease prevention offered at the center is mind stimulation for dementia and Alzheimer’s clients. The center has employees who provide games, arts and crafts, and devotion. Local hospice organizations come to the facility occasionally to play bingo with the clients and give out door prizes. Churches in this area provide devotion on a weekly basis and other groups visit to provide entertainment to keep each client interactive. Clients also play dominos and watch the birds in the live six foot bird aviary housed inside the center. The clients participate in self-awareness activities such as nail care and
chores throughout the facility to aid in self-independence and cleanliness (M. L. Meadows, personal communication, July 4, 2011)

**Health disparities**

“To elucidate health disparities, research must focus on the determinants of disparate health outcomes across populations (Warnecke et al., 2008, p. 1608).” Addressing health disparities have been a national challenge for many decades. Many institutes have supported the efforts to research and organize findings to contribute in reducing health disparities. Health disparities have different determinants requiring different forms of intervention. The determinates of health fall under five extensive categories: policymaking, social factors, health, services, individual behavior, and biology and genetics (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). Examples of each determinant can be viewed on the Healthy People 2020 website. Such determinants can be important allies when improving population health. While disparities in health care are significant and must be addressed, medical care is only accountable for about 10% of health status (Cene, Peek, Jacobs, & Horowitz, 2009). It is imperative to implement health-promoting aspects of client health. To aid with this, an emphasis has been placed on public health.

The different health disparities facing this community are obesity, diabetes, elder heath, and health literacy. Diabetes is an increasingly significant concern of minority populations and affects estimated 21 million Americans. The risk for diabetes is higher among African American and Hispanics and those of lower socioeconomic status (Pamies & Nsiah-Kumi, 2009). Disparities exist in complications and care of diabetes along with environment and lifestyle factors that predispose minority population to diabetes (Pamies & Nsiah-Kumi, 2009). The center employs various roles to implement care for clients with diabetes by providing nutritional
meals with lower sugar content and activities that allow exercise. The nurse checks their nutritional status monthly and educates on proper foods to eat to ensure blood glucose remains within normal suggested value.

Elder health is health disparity pertaining to this community of interest. Older adults are among the fastest growing groups, and not to mention that the first “baby boomers” will turn 65 in 2011. More than 37 million people in this group will be diagnosed with more than one chronic condition by 2030 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). The ability to complete daily activities may decline if illness, chronic disease, or injury limits mental or physical capabilities of the elder. These restrictions make it difficult for the older adults to remain at home (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). The Wiregrass Adult Care Center offers a place for the elder adults to be supervised during the day while their families are a part of the workplace. Diagnosis such as Alzheimer’s disease, kidney disorders, strokes, and blindness affect the clients at the Wiregrass Adult Care Center. Alzheimer’s disease is more prevalent among racial and ethnic minorities therefore risk factors for vascular disease, stroke, and vascular dementia are more predominant in minority groups (Pamies & Nsiah-Kumi, 2009). The center provides cognitive stimulation for clients with dementia and related diagnosis. The games and devotions keep the mind alert and aware. The center also provides transportation for each client which therefore ensures that dementia patients are not placed in danger to others or themselves by driving.

Health literacy is a contributing health disparity to this community. Health literacy is defined as the point to which an individual has the capability to acquire, process, and comprehend health related information and amenities necessary to make choices about their health (Pamies & Nsiah-Kumi, 2009). It has been recognized that to ensure effective health communication low literacy,
language barriers, and cultural diversity must be considered (Andrulis & Brach, 2007). The health literacy facing this community has been addressed by providing educational instructions for those clients that need nutritional teaching and those that need to understand the importance of health wellness and regular physician visits. The health literacy movement stresses the implication of restricting the number of messages delivered to the patients at one time, using simplified dialect, and using the teach-to-goal process that has the patients explain what they have been told and repeat the information until the message is clear and patients understand material (Andrulis & Brach, 2007). Communication is key to advancing and promoting quality healthcare. Effective communication can prevent unnecessary return for treatment or further pain and adverse effects.

Obesity is another health disparity affecting this community. Obesity is a growing problem in the adult population. It affects minorities and people of all ages. Girls are more likely to develop obesity and of an African American race (Pamies & Nsia-Kumi, 2009). The center offers nutritional meals that help to combat this prevalent issue. These meals correlate with each client’s nutritional daily intake needs and are provided throughout the day to ensure stable glucose levels. Clients are also encouraged to participate in exercise activities that are offered daily at the center. The clients at the center have a place to gather outside to get fresh air and communicate with other clients. This community has many disparities but with the help of caring individuals and public health amenities, their health should improve to ensure a more quality life.
References


