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Wellness program to address health disparities

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Purpose: An educational wellness program was created and implemented at a local facility for socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals experiencing both psychiatric and physical illnesses and was the DNP project for this author. The facility includes psychosocial rehabilitation and primary care for acute and chronic physical conditions.

Problem: Cardiovascular disease is greater in those with mental illness. African-American men and women have an increased incidence of hypertension. Priority populations receiving poor health care are racial and ethnic minorities, low income populations and individuals with chronic conditions.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: The program focus was to inspire healthy behaviors through the provision of a wellness program aimed at the conditions frequently seen in this diverse population. The theoretical framework for the project is self-efficacy theory. The belief that one has the power to produce any given task is related to the ability to complete it. Self-efficacy is believed to be the most important pre-condition for behavior change. Manuals and educational materials were created and utilized to support the staff and clients at teaching sessions. This project was consistent with the Eight Dimensions of Wellness of SAMHSA and incorporated the efforts of the National Million Hearts Initiative. The Wellness Initiative supports actions to work toward improving quality of life, cardiovascular health and decreased mortality rates. Screening, pre and posttests during educational sessions and evaluation were the utilized methodology.

Findings: 77 clients participated. 87.5% of individuals screened returned for follow-up. 68.85% of group participants opted for screening. Two individuals required immediate intervention. All individuals screened reported an increase in communication confidence.

Conclusion: Elimination of health disparities in the USA will not occur without the involvement of nurses, other health professionals and communities at large. This project addressed health disparities by empowering individuals to improve their self-efficacy, cardiovascular health and thus their overall wellness.

Biography

Patricia Clark Pappas holds a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Seton Hall University. Her DNP project focused on addressing health disparities in a vulnerable population. She has completed her Master of Science degree in Nursing from Columbia University as a Critical Care Clinical Nurse Specialist. Her area of expertise is adult medical surgical oncology patients. She holds multiple certifications including: Certified Nurse Educator from the National League for Nursing, Clinical Nurse Leader from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and Acute/Critical Care Adult Knowledge Professional from the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses. In 2014, she was selected by the nursing students at Seton Hall University to receive the Faculty Award from the Daisy Foundation in collaboration with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. She was the winner of the Seton Hall University Career Center 2016 Experiential Education Award representing the College of Nursing in recognition of her dedication to service both as a doctoral student as well as a faculty member.

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