

School: VA San Diego Healthcare System

Audience: Post-Baccalaureate

Approach: Nurse Residency Program

Methodology: Hospital based

Contact person: Wayne Overly, CNS

Nursing Course

Care of the Homeless Veteran – This is a 90 minute module intended to assist the learner to understand the culture of homelessness and introduce specific health assessment foci and healthcare needs of homeless Veterans

Class objectives:

Upon completion of this class, the RN resident will be able to:

1. Identify personal and social factors that increase risk to homelessness: (Williams et al., 2012)
2. Identify health issues commonly seen among homeless Veterans
3. Identify increased health risks due to homeless (Goldstein et al., 2012)
4. Identify physical and psychological assessment needs of homeless persons (Goldstein et al., 2012)
5. Identify health risks to different types of environmental exposures and treatments
6. Identify common infectious and parasitic medical conditions and treatments
7. Describe the gender-characteristics of homeless Veterans (Tsai et al., 2012a; 2012b)
8. Identify increase risk for suicide among homeless Veterans (Goldstein et al., 2012)
9. Describe tested interventions that improve lifestyle behaviors and health of homeless Veterans (LePage et al., 2012; Tsai et al., 2011)
10. Describe the national strategic plan within the VA to decrease homelessness among Veterans

Content Outline:

Definition of Homeless Persons:

Definitions vary: Tsai et al., 2012b defined it as "an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for 1 year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years (p. 27)."

Personal and Social Characteristics of Homeless Veterans:

Older-age, unemployment, university education, white race, low income, males, previous arrest or incarceration, drug dependency, psychiatric disorder, sees self as functional disabled, limited social and family support

Health Risks:

Environmental exposure to heat and cold

Infectious diseases and parasite infestations

Skin breakdown and infection

Comorbidities such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, pulmonary diseases, liver disease

Suicide preceded by difficulty controlling violent behavior, depression and substance abuse (Goldstein et al., 2012; Shinka et al., 2012)

Gender differences in homelessness among male and female Veterans (Hamilton et al., 2011; Tsai et al., 2012a).

Women Veterans represent 8% of Veteran population; homeless women are younger, have lower use of a substance use disorder, greater risk of a previous hospital admission for a major mental health condition, higher risk of becoming homeless, less likely to be employed, history of military sexual assault, shorter history of homelessness, less likely to be exposed to combat, VHA Initiatives to decrease homelessness and improve health of this Veteran population

Teaching Strategies:

Slide presentation with numerous photos

Case study and Discussion

References:

1. Goldstein, G., Luther, J., Haas, G. (2012). Medical, psychiatric and demographic factors associated with suicidal behavior in homeless veterans. *Psychiatric Research*, 199, 37–43
2. Hamilton, A., Poza, I., Washington, D. (2011) "Homelessness and Trauma Go Hand-in-Hand": Pathways to Homelessness among Women Veterans. *Women's Health Issues*, 21(4S), S203–S209. DOI:10.1016/j.whi.2011.04.005.
3. LePage, J. & Garcia-Re, E. (2012). Lifestyle coaching on 6- month follow up in recently homeless substance dependent Veterans: A randomized study. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 35 (5), 396–402. DOI: 10.1037/h0094500.
4. Shinka, J., Shinka, K., Casey, R., Kaspro, W., Bossarte, R. (2012). Suicidal behavior in a national sample of older homeless Veterans. *American Journal of Public Health*, Supplement 1, 102 (S1), S147–S152. |
5. Tsai, J., Rosenheck, R., Sullivan, J., Harkness, L., (2011). A Group-intensive peer support model of case management for supported housing. *Psychological Services*, 8(3), 251–259. DOI: 10.1037/a0024837.
6. Tsai, J., Rosenheck, R., Guire, J. (2012a). Comparison of outcomes of homeless: Female and Male Veterans in transitional housing. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 48,705–710. DOI 10.1007/s10597-012-9482-5.
7. Tsai, J., Mares, A., Rosenheck, R. (2012b). Do homeless Veterans have the same needs and outcomes as non-Veterans? *Military Medicine*, 177 (1), 27-31.
8. Williams, B., McGuire, J., Lindsay, R., Baillargeon, J., Stijacic Cenzer, I., Lee, S., Kushel, M. (2010). Coming home: Health status and homelessness of older pre-release prisoners. *J Gen Intern Med*, 25(10):1038–44. DOI: 10.1007/s11606-010-1416-8.