

Title: Implementation of a Student-led Interprofessional Quarterly Foot Clinic for an Unhoused Population

Short Title: Implementation of a Student-Led Foot Clinic for an Unhoused Population

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Abstract:

Intro

It has been well-established that unhoused individuals benefit from receiving regular preventative foot care services¹. The community of Colorado Springs, Colorado, has created a quarterly Foot Clinic in partnership with a local medical school, podiatrists, a FQHC, and a homeless shelter. Foot care entails services such as foot washing, toenail trimming, callous care, wound care, and specialized services provided by podiatrists. The clinic thrives on the continued efforts of volunteers, and the trust and patronage of the unhoused individuals who attend the clinic. The purpose of this project is to describe the process of creating a student-led foot-clinic in an underserved area, with a focus on the outcome of having a community-based program for unhoused individuals that relies on interprofessional volunteer support.

Methods

The volunteer base of each Foot Clinic consists of medical students, nursing students, undergraduate health-professions students, podiatrists, physicians, FQHC administrative staff, and leadership from the hosting homeless shelter. New volunteers must complete an online module and in-person training prior to the start of the clinic to understand their responsibilities. After the clinic, volunteers receive an optional exit-survey querying their comfort level with the population they served and the service they provided, and their likelihood of volunteering with the Foot Clinic again. The services at the Foot Clinic were provided at no cost to the guest. There is also a survey for Foot Clinic guests to determine guest satisfaction with the care they received. In accordance with the University of Colorado IRB exemption, all surveys provided to volunteers and guests were optional and anonymous.

Results

Since 2019, the Foot Clinic has serviced 431 unhoused individuals guests. The guests rate their satisfaction with the foot care clinic on their exit survey as either “excellent/very good/good/fair/poor”. Amongst all clinics, 87.01% of guests rated the care they received as “excellent”. Guests have also reported that they feel treated with respect, with 87.04% of guests “strongly agreeing” that they were treated respectfully (N=431). The volunteer base was 72%

medical students and 27% undergraduate students (N=283). When asked about their motivations to volunteer, the most common answer selected by 43.3% of respondents was “I have interest in giving back to the community, and providing preventative care”. 99.88% of volunteers stated they were “definitely” or “very likely” to volunteer again (N=55).

Conclusion

The Foot Clinic provides care to the unhoused community who often experience stigma in the healthcare setting². The clinic requires continued support from volunteers, and the motivation of the volunteers is primarily “interest in giving back to the community” which indicates that there may be a humanistic component of volunteerism at the clinic. There is also a mutually beneficial relationship that the Foot Clinic serves: the guests obtain foot care, and the volunteers receive invaluable training working with this population. The Foot Clinic, as an interprofessional student-led campus-community collaboration, has provided health care services to individuals experiencing homelessness, and has the potential to be replicated in other communities as a resource for this population.

References:

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