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Clean Water and Sanitation For All

Ashley Barnes

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations produced 17 sustainable developmental goals to better the world. Goal 6 is to ensure access to clean water and sanitation for all. (United Nations, 2015)

Ways to achieve this goal are proper disposal of pharmaceutical drugs, advocate for better health standards, and educate patients.

SIGNIFICANCE

- “Each day, nearly 1,000 children die due to preventable water and sanitation-related diarrheal diseases” (UN, 2015).”
- “840,000 people die each year because they do not have clean reliable drinking water, while 2.5 billion people lack access to improved sanitation” (Wang, 2015).
- ANHE reminds stakeholders that millions of Americans are at risk of exposure to contaminated water. This water can make people sick, further underscoring the importance of robust public health protections, including the Clean Water Rule, to keep our environments safe and clean, free from chemicals that can lead to worse health outcomes (Cook, 2017).
- “Water is essential for tasks such as washing hands, giving newborns their first baths, and the staggering amount of laundry produced every day in healthcare facilities” (Cook, Curtis, & Huffling, 2017 pg.1).
- “According to the World Health Organization, over 2,300 deaths occur every day from diarrheal disease, with 1.5% of the global disease burden due to poor water, sanitation, and hygiene” (Cook, Curtis, & Huffling, 2017 pg.2).

POSITION STATEMENT

Nurses should advocate for people around the world to have clean water and sanitation because they are essential for good health.

SUPPORT FOR POSITION

- “Nearly 80% of all illnesses in developing countries can be traced back to lack of clean water and sanitation” (Wang, 2015).
- “In all nations, water quality standards must keep pace with new and emerging threats such as the persistent and unknown consequences of high concentrations of pharmaceuticals, micro-plastics and organic compounds in water” (Wang, 2015).
- Exposure to contaminated water may lead to a myriad of health issues, including “cancer, birth defects, neurological effects, learning disabilities, and asthma” (Cook, 2017).
- “Certain populations are more vulnerable to harm from unsafe drinking water such as children, the elderly, workers, and pregnant women” (Cook, Curtis, & Huffling, 2017 pg.2).
- “The Santa Cruz River was contaminated with pollutants such as human and pharmaceutical waste, and contaminants from surrounding copper mines” (Cook, Curtis, & Huffling, 2017 pg.18).



Achieving SDG 6 (Institution of Civil Engineering, 2018)

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Nurses who live on the front lines of health maintenance ‘have a keen understanding of how strong environmental and public health standards help keep communities healthy and safe’ (Cook, 2017).
- To ensure “nurses have the tools they need to be strong advocates on behalf of the most vulnerable populations—children, the elderly, low-income families, and expectant mothers— who are at significantly greater risk of life-threatening health concerns” (Cook, 2017).
- “At the federal level, nurses can advocate for strengthening protections like the Clean Water Rule that keep families, children, and communities safe” (Cook, 2017).
- “These diverse forms of communication are most effective when using a tiered approach, using the five “rights” of political advocacy: The right preparation, the right message, the right communicator(s), the right request, and the right repetition” (Cook, Curtis, & Huffling, 2017 pg.20).
- “Educate patients, clients, and community members on the sources of water contamination and how to prevent exposure” (Cook, Curtis, & Huffling, 2017 pg.22).
- Facilitate “standards for handling hazardous waste pharmaceuticals to better fit the operations of the healthcare sector while maintaining protection of human health and the environment” (EPA, 2019).

CONCLUSION

According to the evidence, making sure clean water is essential to life. Poor water and sanitation increases the number of people who die, which include the elderly and children. As a result of this evidence, changes should be implemented to address contaminated water, inadequate hygiene, and sanitation.

Nurses should continue to educate patients, advocate to protect patients and keep water cleaner, and proper disposal of pharmaceutical drugs. These steps can help keep our water clean for all.

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