

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) created a blueprint for all nations “developed and developing”, as a global partnership to end poverty and other deprivations while improving health and education and reducing inequality throughout the world. The Sustainable Development Goals that have been created by the UN all focus on maintaining the planet while promoting the wellbeing and health of all humans on the planet. These goals can then be used throughout communities across the globe to better the people and the community as a whole. The first goal states “end poverty and all its forms everywhere” (UN). The third goal tries to ensure “healthy lives and promote wellbeing for and at all ages. One community that has taken these goals and adopted them is the Lehigh Valley area in Pennsylvania.

SIGNIFICANCE

Street Medicine is a significant program in the community of the Lehigh Valley. In a poll done by The Morning Call (2020), 574 people were counted to be homeless in the Lehigh Valley area. Additionally, around 2,885 people who were homeless or at risk for being homeless called the local 211 number to seek information about services to help the homeless in the area.



(Hulvat, 2017)

POSITION STATEMENT

The UN’s Sustainable Development goals have influenced even smaller communities, like the Lehigh Valley. Lehigh Valley Health Network has implemented a program that they call Street Medicine, where nurses and providers travel the community to help the homeless population.

SUPPORT FOR POSITION

The goal of Street Medicine to provide basic primary care to those experiencing homelessness in the Lehigh Valley area along with teaching. This program exemplifies their attempt to end poverty (1) as well as promote health and wellbeing (3), which falls under the first and third Sustainable Development goal. In a documentary made about Street Medicine titled “Street Medicine”, the ins and outs of this program are revealed to the public. The nurses and doctors that take part in this program wander through the woods, under bridges, anywhere where the homeless population can be found. The program provides medications, laboratory tests, and diagnostic studies free of charge for anyone in this program. The documentary shows the support this program provides to the community by trying to help these people get jobs and housing. Multiple people featured in the video have gone from homeless to working with a place to live. This program recognizes the need to help end poverty and promote wellbeing for all, whether they have the financial means to pay for it or not.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Programs like Street Medicine are an integral part of the communities they reside in. According to the Street Medicine Institute website (2020), the incorporation of programs like these in areas with a large homeless population will help in the following ways in nursing practice:

- Increase in the numbers of jobs for nurses created by the incorporation of these programs
- Reductions in emergency room visits, as the homeless population would use this as a way to receive primary care
- Decreased amount of hospital admissions for the homeless populations
- Decreased length of stay in the hospital for homeless patients
- Decreases the homeless population by helping patients find employment and housing



(McGinley, 2017)

CONCLUSION

Programs like Street Medicine are important programs in the communities that they serve. They provide needed services to people that need them the most but cannot afford or access them. They allow underserved people the ability to be treated like a person and receive the care that they deserve and need to continue to live. Programs like Street Medicine should be implemented in more areas with a high homeless population to allow them to receive the care that they need to prevent disease and infections along with other preventable health problems they may experience because of their homelessness

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