

Poverty Simulation

The PBS documentary, "Poor Kids," was a really interesting watch, it was sad and informative and eye opening. Seeing poverty through the eyes of a child is so much different than experiencing poverty in adulthood; they watch their parents struggle and are lacking provisions at no fault of their own and they see their dreams as unattainable because all that they know is the way that their life is in poverty. No child should have to drag themselves through the streets attempting to find ways to bring home spare change. This documentary was an excellent reminder to evaluate how we see our patients as a whole person, not just the circumstance that have placed them in the hospital under our care. Children are such a resilient people and they are so adaptable, even to things that shouldn't be required of them. Watching "Hard Times Generation" and the presenter asking Ariel and Austin how they respond to people asking about their living situation as if it is automatically something for them to be embarrassed about, and them finding a positive outlook, calling it "an adventure" and "just life", is such a good example of how children can be acutely aware of their experience but also take it in stride. We have to consider the bigger picture; resources that they are going home to, the things that are preventing their health from improving, how this might affect their mentality.

I really appreciated the "Spent" simulation, as it gives people who otherwise have no idea about managing finances in poverty, a glimpse into the everyday sacrifices and stressors of being financially unwell. I think that it would be a useful tool for every healthcare worker and anyone of any care profession to consider as a way to

understand the people that they are caring for. The same is true for the “Making Tough Choices” simulation, I really liked that this one gave detailed explanations of the circumstances and consequences of financial decisions those in poverty make.

I also found it interesting to consider the research that shows poverty and ACE’s to be risk factors for health and development. Often times, we don’t think about the long term effect of situations or actions when in reality there is a direct correlation. Childhood trauma, which is often tied into those suffering through poverty, has direct health consequences, according to Nadine Burke Harris’s TED talk, it is so extreme that it can change a life expectancy by upwards of 20 years. That is astounding to think about and again serves to emphasize the importance of seeing a patient as a whole and caring for our pediatric population to the absolute best of our ability. I think a good way to serve this group is by staying educated on supportive government programs. The summary on poverty mentions WIC, SNAP, and Medicaid all of which are extremely accessible, but only if you are aware of them as a tool. If we can help patients and their families to utilize these we can see better outcomes in nutrition, language and social development, immunizations, and mortality to name a few; perhaps we can even see families begin to overcome poverty and the prevention of adverse childhood events.

Going forward in my education and career, I will continue to seek out educational resources such as these to give me insight into the lives of my patients and to continue in my awareness of how I approach and interact with patients. I always want to be someone that patients and families feel comfortable coming to for information, whether it be medical, or if they are seeking financial resources that would be easy for me to take the time from my day to gather some information and discuss

with them. This was also a reminder for me that to our patients and their families, we are a resource, they might not have someone else to talk to about the things that they are struggling with. I think this understanding will help make me a better nurse.