

## **Vulnerable Populations**

Tracy Donaldson

Lakeview College of Nursing

N314: Introduction to Professional Nursing

Professor Bosch

October 10, 2023

### **Vulnerable Populations**

A vulnerable population in healthcare may be different than your own population or culture, but understanding the culture within that population is vital. Cultural competence is understanding other cultures, which is essential to nursing. It encompasses a wide variety of cultures and can range from understanding another's language, religion, and beliefs to validating someone in a socioeconomic class other than your own.

First, cultural competence is important in nursing because nurses must interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. Since a nurse will be treating clients from all different cultures, the nurse must understand their client's culture to provide the best care. For instance, some countries view enduring pain or other symptoms related to a specific disease as essential to overcoming that disease (Reeve & Lavery, 2023). If a client is from another culture and has a particular view on pain management or end-of-life care, it is crucial to comprehend those views to follow through with their wishes.

Second, understanding vulnerable populations and their culture in healthcare is essential to nursing. Many people are considered vulnerable, and why one would not seek healthcare in the United States varies widely from LBGQ individuals, prisoners, the disabled, homeless individuals, the elderly population, and the critically ill. It could also be the need for more understanding of why to seek medical care, or they may fear medical professionals. However, the poverty population and healthcare are strongly related. According to Census.gov, 28 million, or 8.6% of Americans, did not have insurance in 2020 (United States Census Bureau, 2021). An

individual may be unable to afford insurance, high deductibles, and medications. If someone is classified at or below the poverty level, they may have restricted access to healthcare services, leading to worse health outcomes.

A specific judgment that I had in the past about a vulnerable population would be about homeless drug addicts. Instead of looking at drug addiction as a severe disease needing help, I used to think that they could help themselves if they wanted to. However, they need healthcare to treat the condition of addiction that they have. There is no hope for them if the healthcare field discards them as trash.

My feelings on delivering care to homeless or impoverished communities is that the United States needs more mobile healthcare units with healthcare professionals to help them with preventative health maintenance and mental health care. No one knows the true reason why they are in the situation that they are in, so we need to help them. Sometimes, life throws us into unwanted circumstances that are unavoidable. Whenever help is needed, we should reach out and help all we can.

In closing, cultural competence, especially within the many different vulnerable populations, should be understood by healthcare professionals. Imagine putting yourself in their situation, and no one understands your way of thinking, way of life, or why you are in your circumstances. It would be beyond frustrating. Nurses should advocate for vulnerable populations and educate themselves further about their society.

### References

Reeve, L., & Lavery, J. (2023). Navigating cultural competence in district nursing. *British Journal of Community Nursing*, 28(7), 338–343.

<https://doi.org/10.12968/bjcn.2023.28.7.338>

United States Census Bureau (2021, November 2). *Income, poverty and health insurance coverage in the United*

*States*. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/income-poverty-health-insurance-coverage.html>