

**Vulnerable Populations Paper**

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Nursing healthcare providers should sustain their cultural competency expertise to ensure equitable healthcare delivery for vulnerable populations like homeless people and individuals in poverty. Creative Health Care Management defined cultural competence as the skill to understand and communicate with people from various cultures by recognizing one's own worldview while learning about other cultural practices and developing positive attitudes toward cultural diversity (CHCM, 2024). Healthcare systems improve patient health outcomes when they establish trust with patients and work to eliminate disparities. This research explores how nursing practice must integrate cultural competence to address specific needs of homeless individuals while delivering equitable care.

Cultural awareness training for healthcare providers often strengthens their skills and helps them provide better treatment of patients. This allows for specialized care for a diverse group from various cultural backgrounds that are outside of our soil. Maura Deering, J.D. states that "Culturally competent care consists of four components: awareness of one's cultural worldview, attitudes toward cultural differences, knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and cross-cultural skills." These key elements can boost the healthcare provider's cultural competence and in return, they can deploy them in their day-to-day care with patients from all corners of the Earth. In addition, healthcare providers can improve on a higher patient connection as opposed to another transaction. This allows the healthcare provider to earn the trust of their patients.

The homeless population shows high vulnerability levels when they need healthcare services tailored to their specific medical needs. Homeless people encounter major obstacles

when they try to access healthcare because they lack insurance coverage and proper transportation and they do not trust healthcare providers (Ernstmeier & Christman, 2022). Homeless people tend to have the most trouble in terms of healthcare needs as they are susceptible to conditions that put them at an unfair advantage of contracting undiagnosed adverse health conditions. Most of the time, they go undetected and end in life-threatening conditions. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, “Homelessness can be caused by chronic health issues, and homelessness can cause chronic health issues. Poor health can rapidly escalate into employment problems, financial difficulties, and housing issues. Homeless people experience increased exposure to the elements, disease, violence, unsanitary conditions, malnutrition, stress, and addictive substances – all of which increases the chance of requiring healthcare.” The lack of clean-living conditions exposes homeless individuals to a higher risk of contracting infectious diseases. Homeless patients need healthcare providers to deliver trauma-informed care and nonjudgmental support to link them with community resources for housing, nutrition, and mental health services. Nurses with a clear understanding of homeless people's unique challenges deliver more compassionate care which improves patient outcomes and closes healthcare service gaps.

Through self-reflection, I discovered that I had previously blamed missed appointments and care plan failures of homeless patients to their supposed lack of urgency or irresponsibility. Understanding systemic challenges such as lack of housing and limited resources opened my eyes to a new viewpoint from judgment to empathy, which helped me identify fundamental causes for patient care deficiencies. I do empathize that the system treats the homeless in a far

unfair manner versus those who can afford it. Most healthcare centers need cash flow for them to continue to keep their doors open, so they may have preferential treatment.

I feel that being able to offer fair healthcare for the homeless/impoverished population is something that we focus our attention on. They are already susceptible to the harsh conditions that make it easier for them to fall ill and have a weakened immune system due to a lack of nutritious foods and a clean environment that the general population has access to. There should be a stronger and equal support system in place to take care of our fellow brothers and sisters in our homeland.

In conclusion, healthcare providers must arm themselves with skills such as an understanding of cultural appropriation, the lack thereof prejudice, and an unbiased mindset that will allow them to treat patients with the best care. The less fortunate population, such as the homeless and poor, are often mistreated due to preferential treatment as it is assumed that they cannot afford the care. Being able to have the trust of patients, knowing that they will receive unbiased care will foster a stronger relationship with the healthcare providers and their patients.

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