

Homelessness: Literature Review

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Individuals experiencing homelessness are one vulnerable population group that is prevalent in the Danville community. One of the services available to aid those who are homeless is The Dwelling Place. The Dwelling Place is in Danville in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church. It provides free meals, clothing, hygiene products, and bus passes to those experiencing homelessness or at risk. Their day center provides the individuals, referred to as “neighbors,” with a comfortable place to eat their meals, enjoy television, or just sit and rest. The day center also has a shower room and laundry room for the neighbors to utilize. The Dwelling Place also offers two homes for temporary shelter to families or individuals in need of a short-term residence before finding a new home.

The Dwelling Place is open on Mondays and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and offers sack lunches on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Our group volunteered on different Mondays and Fridays to help wherever needed. We helped distribute supplies that the neighbors requested. We also helped organize donated items in the hygiene pantry. We would organize their snacks and non-perishable foods. We also organized the donated clothes and shoes. Two members of our group assisted in packing lunches in the kitchen.

Homelessness and those at risk of experiencing homelessness in the Danville community are prevalent. Therefore, our group decided to choose The Dwelling Place for the legacy project. The Dwelling Place can be one resource that local nurses in the community provide for patients who may be at risk of becoming homeless or those who are already experiencing homelessness. The articles discussed in this literature review relate to the homeless population, which is the major population that The Dwelling Place serves. The articles reviewed discuss the prevalence of mental disorders in the homeless population, the roles of religious organizations, and their interventions. The director of the day center in The Dwelling Place stated that many of the

neighbors who come for their services have a mental disorder that is typically not being treated. The Dwelling Place is also a faith-based organization that offers religious services to its neighbors, who are invited to participate if they choose to do so. The other articles reviewed discussed the vulnerabilities of pregnant women experiencing homelessness, barriers affecting the homeless population, and the scope of practice of nurses in providing care for the homeless population in shelters or places like The Dwelling Place. The Dwelling Place welcomes a diverse range of individuals, including pregnant women who are homeless. There are also many barriers that prevent the homeless population from receiving the care and services that they need. The Dwelling Place does not currently provide healthcare services; however, it is a future goal of theirs. Therefore, understanding the scope of practice that nurses can perform to care for the homeless population in these shelters and services can help develop a plan to implement this into action.

Homelessness is an issue that affects the local community, and services that can help these individuals are essential to improving the community. The Dwelling Place provides aid to this vulnerable population and can serve as a starting point for those seeking to escape this situation. It is also a valuable resource for nurses in the community to be aware of, helping patients access the necessary support. Whether it is a meal, clothes, hygiene products, or a place to sit, The Dwelling Place provides a safe, comfortable, and nonjudgmental environment for the neighbors of this community.

Julia Bushnell

The Prevalence of Mental Disorders Among Homeless People in High-income Countries: An Updated Systematic Review and Meta-regression Analysis

Throughout the world, homelessness continues to be a major issue. Studies have indicated that mental health disorders are prevalent among the homeless population. This article uses a meta-analysis and systematic review to gather data on mental health disorders in homeless populations within high-income countries (Gutwinski et al., 2021). The individuals surveyed in the study have diagnoses that include but are not limited to schizophrenia, alcohol abuse, personality disorder, major depressive disorder, and drug use disorder (Gutwinski et al., 2021).

The first major finding in these studies is the result of 37% of homeless individuals being diagnosed with alcohol abuse disorders, becoming the most prevalent disorder predominantly in Germany and the US (Gutwinski et al., 2021). Drug-use disorders are the second most common diagnosis made in the homeless population (Gutwinski et al., 2021). While gathering this data, environmental and financial factors are important to include. The tax on alcohol in Germany is lower than that in other nations, making alcohol easier to afford and thus contributing to alcohol abuse disorders in their communities (Gutwinski et al., 2021). As nurses, it is important to understand that substance abuse may be a coping mechanism for those who are homeless.

The conduction of this study also found a recommended study characteristic based on the ETHOS criteria (Gutwinski et al., 2021). When collecting data among the homeless population, random sampling, interviews with individuals from a clinical background (such as nurses and doctors), and standard diagnostic instruments should be utilized in future research to promote adequate results (Gutwinski et al., 2021).

Homelessness increases the risk of non-compliance and ineffective treatment due to the lack of resources. The data showed a high prevalence rate of treatable mental health illnesses such as schizophrenia and major depressive disorder (Gutwinski et al., 2021). In the healthcare profession, working to make mental health resources and treatment available to the homeless population will improve their quality of life.

High rates of homelessness are reported even in countries with higher-income statuses, as well as debt and lack of banking (Gutwinski et al., 2021). The results showed a correlation between homelessness and mental health disorders (Gutwinski et al., 2021). With substance use disorders being the most prevalent, coping mechanisms and access to substances should be considered. Utilization of ETHOS criteria is recommended for conducting research on the homeless population to produce data that can further promote quality improvement (Gutwinski et al., 2021). The rates of treatable mental illness are predominant and stress the need for attainable resources in communities (Gutwinski et al., 2021). Focusing on the link between homelessness and mental health disorders can be used to build proper preventative measures. This article lacked data from the refugees and women in the homeless population (Gutwinski et al., 2021). Addressing homelessness and mental health disorders is crucial to developing and existing communities.

An Ecological View of Religious Intervention in the Homeless Community

The homeless population often looks within their community for assistance with resources, food, and hygiene. Institutions often host food drives, fundraisers, and shelters. One common institution is churches and religious programs. An analysis was conducted to explore the roles of faith-based and secular organizations, as well as the interventions offered to the

homeless population (Elbe et al., 2020). Noting the difference in interventions between non-governmental organizations (NGO) and secular organizations, non-religious and religious focus, and the impact of religious interventions on the community (Elbe et al., 2020).

A secular organization is a private organization and is compared with NGOs and the services offered to the homeless population (Elbe et al., 2020). NGOs typically offer services that are specific to individuals, while secular organizations offer a comprehensive list. The analysis shows that NGOs hold niche expertise that crucially assists the contribution to the homeless population (Elbe et al., 2020). Secular organizations are seen as key resources for shelter, ultimately assisting those who struggle with homelessness throughout their lives (Elbe et al., 2020).

NGOs and secular organizations can enforce a religious or non-religious focus while assisting the homeless population. While the facility itself is faith-based, those with a non-religious focus stressed the importance of a welcoming environment without the expectation of religious activities (Elbe et al., 2020). A religious focus left their clients with mixed opinions about the services they received (Elbe et al., 2020). A finding suggests that the population receiving services at a religious-focused facility ultimately did not increase their religiousness (Elbe et al., 2020). This demonstrates that these facilities did not successfully display their message whilst offering their services (Elbe et al., 2020).

The services offered at these different religious facilities all had one goal in mind: to tend to those in need (Elbe et al., 2020). Promoting a welcoming environment, regardless of religion, will lead to the most successful outcome in the relationship between the facility and the homeless

population (Elbe et al., 2020). Analysis revealed that a strong sense of community was developed with successful interventions offered by religious facilities (Elbe et al., 2020).

Faith-based facilities are continually offering services to the homeless population, driven by a desire to do the greatest good for their community. With the difference in services between NGOs and secular organizations, religious and non-religious focus, and the impact of the religious interventions, the community overall benefits from the resources offered to improve quality of life (Elbe et al., 2020). Reducing, preventing, and improving homelessness is a community effort, and faith-based facilities can be seen as inspiring for those in the community to help their neighbors in need.

Tracy Donaldson

Barriers and Facilitators to Health Care Access for People Experiencing Homelessness in Four European Countries: An Exploratory Qualitative Study

A social determinant influencing health is housing; one's quality of life may suffer without a place to live. The researchers used a qualitative approach, utilizing interviews that allowed interviewees who had experienced homelessness to share any relevant information they deemed necessary. Those who are homeless face substantial issues with substance misuse, mental health, and physical health. They can encounter significant obstacles when attempting to receive health services, and they are known to be more likely to experience adverse health outcomes and premature mortality than those who are housed (Carmichael et al., 2023). A person experiencing homelessness will prioritize living necessities, such as a roof over their head and food, over preventive healthcare (Carmichael et al., 2023). For example, social isolation during homelessness can worsen mental health, and neglecting long-term health conditions might result

in more serious complications (Carmichael et al., 2023). Other obstacles to receiving healthcare include not having a fixed residence or photo identification and finding it difficult to keep appointments due to a lack of access to a mobile phone or email (Carmichael et al., 2023).

Vulnerabilities Among Homeless Women Experiencing Pregnancy, Childbirth and Puerperium

A qualitative, exploratory-descriptive study gathered data from interviews with twelve women who had gone through pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period while homeless. This article explained that women who experience homelessness can be more vulnerable than men. Without access to housing, they are twice as likely to become pregnant, more likely to experience obstetric difficulties, and will receive less treatment (Schiavi et al., 2023). Mothers who are homeless may also face more severe mental health issues, violent situations, and the significant effects of motherhood, which can lead to embarrassment and not wanting to seek services (Schiavi et al., 2023). Many times, when a homeless woman is pregnant, it is the only opportunity for access to the health system (Schiavi et al., 2023). Nevertheless, because they do not have a stable home environment, they may be misinformed, treated with disapproval, and have their child taken away by protective services (Schiavi et al., 2023). Health professionals should avoid judgment and discrimination when treating these vulnerable individuals; their approach and care to these clients can be life-changing.

Lillian Ljubojevic

Scoping Review: Scope of Practice of Nurse-led Services and Access to Care for People Experiencing Homelessness

This article is based on numerous peer-reviewed articles regarding nurses' scope of practice and their help to the homeless population. This research used data from nineteen different studies. Twelve studies were quantitative and non-randomized, four were qualitative, and three used mixed design. All of the data was collected in the community or outpatient place. It highlights the significant efforts made by nurses in improving the health of homeless individuals (McWilliams et al., 2022). Nurses contact these vulnerable individuals in shelters, on the streets, or in dwelling places. Nurses can perform physical and mental assessments and refer these individuals to providers who can help them. Nurses can help with wound treatment and vaccinations or collect samples for laboratory analysis (McWilliams et al., 2022). Nurses (NPs) prescribe medications, do checkups for cervical pathology, check for STDS, and provide contraception. Nurses check for viral diseases and educate homeless people (McWilliams et al., 2022). The results of this work can be used to implement plans to improve health care for people experiencing homelessness, considering their health care needs and short life spans.

Health and Access to Healthcare in Homeless People: Protocol for a Mixed-Methods Study

In the medical world, homelessness is a problem that needs to be addressed because homelessness can affect the health and life span of homeless people. This article is based on research to find the correlation between lacking a proper home and poor health. Researchers generally believe that suitable housing provides social status, dignity, and a peace of mind. On the other hand, individuals who do not have a home experience shorter life spans and poorer health (Bedmar et al., 2022). The researchers used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative part of the experiment interviewed 300 participants, all homeless, on medications used, substance abuse, health status, use of healthcare

services, occupation, education, and others. The qualitative part of the experiment collected information on their personal lives, family relationships, and the effects of those on their health. This type of study showed a very complex relationship between homelessness and health due to many factors involved. Although the research did not yield a definitive solution for the health needs of homeless individuals, the collected data can be utilized in future studies. In conclusion, the researchers believe that to resolve the problems associated with homelessness, the United Nations and the governments of other countries should be involved in the process (Bedmar et al., 2022). Due to its complexity, this topic will require extensive research to find effective solutions for eradicating homelessness.

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