Proposal Part 1
Perceived Need and Receipt of Psychiatric Services
Among Homeless Seniors in New York City
Hyunsook Lee, Hannah DeMatteo, Samuel Choi

Introduction & Background

Problem Statement

Overall research focus and background,

Introduction of the target population and their characteristics and definition

The population of homeless seniors that struggle with mental health issues can be as large as 49% of the population (Rosenheck et al. 2015). There is a need for providing psychiatric care to homeless seniors who are mentally ill, but there are challenges due to limited resources and access to healthcare. The research gathered partly focuses on the types of mental illnesses that homeless seniors normally face. Although mental health is many times the cause of individuals becoming homeless (Habánik, 2018), there are factors of homelessness that could be exacerbating these mental health problems as well. The problem of mental health for homeless seniors is significant in many areas but they still struggle to receive care. Therefore, the research also focuses on the stigmas and setbacks that keep this population from easily receiving the care they need.

There are supportive approaches that have been used, involving housing programs, community outreach, and community organization collaboration, all working with and through mental health and primary care providers as well as homeless housing, to help the homeless that suffer from mental illness. Ultimately, more research is needed to be done in order to fully understand and come up with the best course of action to fight against this social problem.

However, considering the perception and receipt of care for homeless seniors who are mentally ill can assist if we take what we have learned and look to raise awareness, reduce the stigma and walk towards the goal of achieving proper care for this neglected population in society.

The target population of this research study are homeless seniors in New York City. These are individuals inside of the New York City area who are 50 years or older with no stable housing (Humphries et al., 2020). Homeless seniors with mental health issues are also addressed in this study, these issues can involve those with severe mental illness, substance abuse problems, social isolation and/or cognitive impairments.

The study population focuses on homeless seniors in New York City, however, this social problem is apparent in many other areas, therefore, the research considers homeless seniors from outside New York City that are in need of psychiatric care as well for purposes of comparison and contextual background that works to help us understand the social problem as a whole.

<div align="center">Significance of the Study (Felt Need)</div>

Homelessness is defined as "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." In America, homelessness has been a national crisis that has been on the rise since the 1600-the 1700s. and has progressively worsened over time, with approximately more than 500,000 homeless individuals crowding the streets across the USA and approximately 150 million across the entire world lacking a proper shelter. Bearing this information in mind, it is imperative to realize just how impactful homelessness really is on our society mentally, physically, and financially.

Homelessness can be the main catalyst of an individual's myriad of mental and social problems such as psychiatric distress, increased vulnerability, difficulty obtaining employment, and more. The result of being homeless can significantly impact the mental state of a person as they are consistently on the verge of death every day as are vulnerable to the harsh weather and dangerous characters roaming the streets.

Homelessness can also significantly impact the environment as well. Since homeless individuals are left to fend for themselves, they have to scavenge for whatever resources they can collect. This is problematic as it leads to the excessive discarding of human wastes, biohazardous materials, used syringes, and potential fires from disposed lit cigarettes.

The overwhelming crisis of homelessness impacts the financial state of the world as well. To help maintain the costs of providing temporary shelter and food to the growing number of homeless individuals, the government must continue to exhaust its remaining funds to assist them and this affects the taxpayers as well since we are the ones responsible for the costs. Not to mention the fact that the economy loses working manpower to help the economy function smoothly.

A brief critique of existing knowledge; identification of gaps to be addressed by the study

In the aforementioned paragraph above, I stated the plethora of negative factors of homelessness that affects our society as a whole, physically, mentally, and financially. We have the ability and resources to combat the overwhelming margin of homelessness in the world. People have a tendency to believe that others will help take care of the problem which results in a vicious cycle of ignorance and selfishness.

There are numerous methods of supporting this crisis. One of them is by spreading awareness of the issue through social media and reaching out to other non-profit organizations to help support the cause.

Another method is to provide volunteer work such as feeding homeless individuals in soup kitchens and providing therapy sessions, medical support such as dental work and diagnosing them to ensure their diseases are treated, and providing proper education.

Another form of assistance is charity work, donating unwanted materials and food to donation drives, and contributing money to build houses for the homeless. As you can tell, the homelessness crisis dates back all the way to the 1600-1700s and progressively worsened over time (the Great Depression in 1930 greatly exacerbated this

Anticipated utility or impact on social work practice

Improved access to mental health services: The research findings can inform the development of programs and policies that improve access to mental health services for homeless seniors in New York City. This can include the development of community-based mental health programs, outreach and engagement strategies, and the provision of supportive services such as housing and transportation.

Enhanced quality of care: The identification of effective interventions and strategies can improve the quality of mental health care for homeless seniors in New York City. This can include the use of trauma-informed care and culturally competent services that are tailored to the specific needs of homeless seniors from diverse backgrounds.

Collaboration among healthcare practitioners: The research can promote collaboration among healthcare practitioners, social workers, and community organizations in the provision of mental health services to homeless seniors. This can help ensure that homeless seniors receive the comprehensive care they need to improve their mental health outcomes.

Development of evidence-based best practices: The research can inform the development of evidence-based best practices in social work that can be used to guide clinical decision-making and the development of treatment plans for elderly clients. This can lead to better mental health outcomes for elderly clients and the development of more effective and efficient treatment programs.

Overall, the research on the perceived need for and receipt of psychiatric services among homeless seniors in New York City can have a significant impact on social work practice by improving access to mental health services, enhancing the quality of care, promoting collaboration among healthcare practitioners, and developing evidence-based best practices.

Literature Review

Theme 1. Increase of Elder Population in the U.S.

Definition of the Elderly, Statistics, problems caused by the society of advanced age

The elderly population is typically defined as individuals aged 65 years or older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). According to the Administration on Aging, there were over 56 million Americans aged 65 and older in 2020, representing 16.9% of the total population (Administration on Aging, 2020). The aging population is projected to continue growing, with estimates suggesting that by 2060, the elderly population will reach nearly 95 million (Ortman et al., 2014).

Problems Caused by the Society of Advanced Age

Healthcare Services: One of the primary challenges of the aging population is the increased demand for healthcare services. As individuals age, they are more likely to develop chronic health conditions that require ongoing medical care, leading to a strain on the healthcare system. Additionally, older adults often require specialized care for conditions such as dementia and mobility limitations. The current healthcare system may not be adequately equipped to handle the needs of this growing population. The ecological systems theory posits that individuals are affected by their environment and that their behavior is influenced by various

systems, including the healthcare system. This theory highlights the need for systemic change to address the healthcare needs of the aging population (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Social Services: Another challenge of the aging population is the increased demand for social services, such as home health aides, transportation services, and meal delivery. Many older adults require assistance with activities of daily living, and the current system may not be able to meet this demand adequately. The social determinants of the health model suggest that social factors, such as income and education, can impact health outcomes. In the case of the aging population, access to social services may be a determinant of health outcomes (Marmot et al., 2008).

Housing: housing is another critical issue for the aging population. Many older adults live on a fixed income and may struggle to afford safe and accessible housing. Additionally, as mobility and cognitive function decline, older adults may require specialized housing, such as assisted living facilities or nursing homes. The life course perspective suggests that individual experiences are shaped by historical and societal events, such as economic changes, that may impact access to housing (Elder, 1998).

Possible Interventions: Several interventions may help prevent and diminish the problems caused by the advanced age of society. These interventions include:

- Investing in the healthcare workforce to ensure that there are enough healthcare professionals to meet the needs of the aging population.

- Increasing funding for social services, such as home health aides and transportation services.

- Developing affordable and accessible housing options for older adults.

- Promoting healthy lifestyles, such as regular exercise and a healthy diet, to prevent or delay the onset of chronic health conditions.

- Increasing access to technology, such as telemedicine and virtual support groups, to provide social and healthcare services remotely.

The increase in the elderly population in the U.S. poses several challenges for society. These challenges include increased demand for healthcare services, social services, and housing. Existing theories and models, such as the ecological systems theory, social determinants of health model, and life course perspective, can help explain the factors contributing to these challenges. Possible interventions, such as investing in the healthcare workforce, increasing funding

Theme 2. Geriatric Mental Health in the U.S.

Types of mental illness among elderly people, the cost that US society spends to prevent

Mental health disorders among the elderly are a significant public health concern in the United States. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the most common mental health disorders among older adults include depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and dementia-related disorders such as Alzheimer's disease. Depression is the most prevalent mental health disorder among the elderly, affecting approximately 6.5 million adults aged 65 and older in the U.S. (NIMH, 2018). Depression in older adults can be caused by several factors, including changes in life circumstances, physical health problems, and social isolation. Untreated depression can lead to significant impairments in daily functioning, decreased quality of life, and an increased risk of suicide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

Anxiety disorders also commonly affect older adults, with an estimated 3.7% of adults aged 65 and older experiencing anxiety disorders (NIMH, 2018). Symptoms of anxiety disorders can include excessive worry, fear, and avoidance behaviors, which can significantly impact an individual's ability to perform daily activities (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019).

Bipolar disorder affects approximately 1% of the elderly population in the U.S. (NIMH, 2018). Bipolar disorder is characterized by episodes of mood swings between manic and depressive states, and can significantly impact an individual's daily functioning and quality of life.

Schizophrenia is less common among the elderly, affecting less than 1% of the elderly population in the U.S. (NIMH, 2018). Schizophrenia is a severe mental health disorder characterized by delusions, hallucinations, and disordered thinking.

Dementia-related disorders such as Alzheimer's disease are prevalent among older adults, with an estimated 5.8 million Americans aged 65 and older living with Alzheimer's disease in the U.S. (Alzheimer's Association, 2021). Dementia-related disorders can significantly impact an individual's cognitive and functional abilities, leading to impairments in daily functioning and increased risk of institutionalization (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019).

The cost of mental health disorders among the elderly in the U.S. is significant. In 2015, the U.S. spent an estimated $71 billion on mental health treatment for adults aged 65 and older, including the cost of hospitalization, outpatient care, prescription medication, and other mental health-related services (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019).

Efforts to prevent and treat mental health disorders among the elderly can significantly reduce the burden of illness and associated costs. Evidence-based interventions such as psychotherapy, medication management, and social support programs have been shown to be effective in treating mental health disorders among the elderly (American Psychological Association, 2015).

Theme 3. Accessibility of Psychiatric Service Among the Elderly

The ease of psychiatric service access among the homeless elderly

Access to psychiatric services is a crucial aspect of geriatric mental health, particularly among homeless elderly populations who may face additional barriers to accessing care. Research suggests that homeless elderly individuals have high rates of mental illness, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse disorders, and may be at increased risk of suicide (Desai et al., 2017; Voss et al., 2016). However, they face multiple barriers to accessing care, including lack of health insurance, transportation difficulties, stigma, and limited availability of specialized geriatric mental health services (O'Connell et al., 2018).

One study found that homeless older adults in New York City had significantly higher rates of mental illness compared to their housed counterparts, but were less likely to have a regular source of healthcare (Lee CT, Guzman D, Ponath C, et al). Additionally, the study found that among those who did access psychiatric services, homeless elderly individuals were more likely to receive care in emergency departments or hospitals, which may not be the most appropriate setting for ongoing mental health management (Brown et al., 2018).

The lack of accessibility to psychiatric services among homeless elderly individuals can have significant consequences, including increased healthcare costs, decreased quality of life, and higher rates of morbidity and mortality. Therefore, it is essential to improve access to mental health services for this vulnerable population. Some potential interventions that have been

proposed to improve access to care for homeless elderly individuals include the development of specialized geriatric mental health services, the use of telemedicine and mobile health technologies, and increased collaboration between mental health providers and homeless services organizations (O'Connell et al., 2018).

In summary, homeless elderly individuals face significant barriers to accessing psychiatric services, which can have detrimental effects on their mental and physical health. More research is needed to understand the unique needs of this population and to develop effective interventions to improve their access to care.

Purpose of Study and Proposed Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not psychiatric intervention services can improve the mental stability of the senior homeless individuals who are mentally ill. Some factors that affect the perceptions of need for psychiatric services include the severe lack of affordable housing provided for the homeless seniors which in turn can lead to potential health complications and mental health issues which can lead to substance abuse and social isolation.

This study will be responsible for researching the various types of mental illnesses that the homeless seniors experience and the plethora of factors that can lead to them becoming homeless and how it can be prevented through carefully guided steps.

The study will be conducted by comparing the mental state of homeless seniors who are not mentally ill and homeless seniors who are experiencing mental illnesses and have them treated in specialized mental health institutions and record the results after they have been fully treated. This will help determine whether or not specialized healthcare services will make a

difference within the homeless senior's mental state and allow them to be independent and financially support themselves

The study will use the Behavioral Model for Vulnerable Populations as the theoretical framework. The Behavioral Model is a theoretical framework that was developed by Ronald Andersen and his colleagues to explain the factors that influence healthcare utilization (Andersen, 1995). This model is widely used in health services research to understand the determinants of health service utilization and to identify potential barriers to access.

The Behavioral Model is useful in analyzing healthcare utilization because it allows researchers to identify and analyze the factors that contribute to disparities in access and utilization. The model can be used to investigate why certain groups of individuals may have lower rates of healthcare utilization and to identify potential interventions that may improve access to healthcare services.

This model proposes that access to healthcare services is influenced by three factors: predisposing factors (e.g., demographics, beliefs), enabling factors (e.g., insurance, income), and need factors (e.g., health status, perceived need). The model will help to explain the factors associated with the perceived need for and receipt of psychiatric services among homeless seniors in New York City.

Contribution to Best Practices

This research would contribute to assisting in the comprehension of best practices by providing a collection of vital characteristics that have been shown to be effective in the receipt of psychiatric services among homeless seniors in New York City. Furthermore, physicians and social workers can use this information to identify the best available psychiatric treatment for

their elderly patients. Practitioners in charge of developing and implementing psychiatric

treatment programs for the homeless elderly may also use the information to ensure that their

programs are based on the best available scientific evidence.

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