

A Nursing Plan for Canton, Ohio:

Diagnoses, Interventions, and the Role of the Community Health Nurse

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The City of Canton has a multitude of resources for its inhabitants. Some of the resources include, but are not limited to healthy start, Catholic charities of Stark County, Pregnancy Support Centers of Stark County, WIC program, Planned Parenthood of Northeast Ohio, and Canton City health department. Furthermore, the Canton City health department STD clinic, supplemental nutrition assistance program, health and wellness fairs, Help Me Grow, and Parents without Partners. The above mentioned resources are just a few of the many that are available to the inhabitants of the City of Canton. All of which are aimed the reducing the many health disparities discussed within this text. These resources seem to be a public health nurse's dream come true. Unfortunately, many residents of the City of Canton still battle with health care needs. This is most likely due to the lack of awareness of the resources that the City of Canton provides. There are many minorities in the City of Canton, and single mothers, low-income families, and those without a high school education are the main groups that this text will focus on. The percent of families below poverty are significantly higher in the City of Canton as compared with county and state percentages, and the mean income for the City's workers is much lower as well. More than half of births for the City of Canton were to unmarried mothers, and the percent of high school graduates was significantly lower than that of Stark County and the state of Ohio. These findings, along with several others that will be discussed later all contribute to health disparities for the residents of Canton.

After reviewing statistics and findings, the researchers were able to formulate two major nursing diagnoses for the City of Canton. The first diagnosis is Ineffective Health Maintenance related to a lack of education of readiness as evidenced by a high incidence of sexually transmitted infections in relation to county totals (the incidences of these infections in the City of Canton represent at least half of the county incidences), a low percentage of high school and

college graduates compared with Stark County and Ohio, and the fact that the unemployment rate for the City of Canton is almost double the rate of unemployment for both Stark County and the state of Ohio.

The large number of under-educated residents in the City of Canton indicates that there is a need for education on the signs, symptoms, transmission, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. People with a lower education level may simply not know what is needed to keep themselves and others safe from these diseases. Because there is also a high unemployment rate in the City of Canton, there is a need for the education on these diseases to be free of cost.

The researchers believe that health education on sexually transmitted diseases should begin in the community's schools, and extend to teaching the people that kids are surrounded by on a daily basis; such as parents, teachers, sports coaches, and etc. Teenagers in the community need to be taught a health-oriented approach to sexual activity. Partner-reduction and delayed sexual debut should be discussed (Genius & Genius, 2004). Courses that are taught in a school setting should not be too long in length, but should be taught in a series of classes. A systematic review of programs aimed at reducing sex-related issues in teenagers found that programs that were not long in duration, spread over several sessions, and teach specific tasks; such as using birth control and condoms were dependable in increasing the use of condoms in teens (Robin et. al, 2004).

Abstinence-only and comprehensive sexual education classes are also effective in educating the community's youth about sexually transmitted infections (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2010). Furthermore, sex education has been shown "to be effective at both delaying the onset of sexual activity and decreasing sexual activity in those adolescents who are already sexually active" (Allender & Walton-Spradley, 2001, p. 565). Not only is sex education

an important intervention, but so is immunizations. A primary prevention of sexually transmitted disease or infection is the immunization of females and males with the human papillomavirus vaccine (HPV4). This vaccine is used in females, ages 9 to 26 years, for the prevention of cervical, vulvular, vaginal precancerous lesions, and cancer. HPV4 vaccine aids also in the prevention of anogenital warts. In males, ages 9 to 26 years, the HPV4 vaccine helps protect against genital warts cases (Campus-Outcalt, 2009).

Community health nurses have the resources and mindset to take initiative in reducing the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STI's) in the City of Canton. By educating school administrators, parents, and other policy makers about the severity of the issue and encouraging communication with children at home about sexually transmitted infections, nurses can help to ensure that the next generation of teenagers is more prepared to protect themselves and others from STI's. Providing referrals to residents for available, affordable, and non-punitive resources to obtain contraception information and protection can help to eliminate the development of new cases of STI's and lead residents of Canton to take control of their own sexual health.

Maintaining public awareness on the high incidence of sexually transmitted infections by issuing a public service announcement which includes resources of education such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website can offer more education and insight for community of Canton. Health care professionals should be ready and able to answer questions regarding sexual health; especially when and if a public service announcement is implemented. Most government sites are excellent sources of data for health care professionals to use while educating their clients because they include clinical guidelines, epidemiological data, and research reports (Tietz, Davies, & Morgan, 2004).

Another intervention which addresses the diagnosis of ineffective health maintenance is the implementation of health system guidance when working with residents of the City of Canton. The under-educated and unemployed individuals in Canton may be unable to effectively navigate the health care system due to lack of knowledge and/or lack of financial resources. It is the job of the community health nurse to identify whether the community is able to navigate the health care system in a way that leads to improved health status by reduction and prompt treatment of sexually transmitted infections.

To provide health system guidance regarding sexual health, patients presenting to the emergency department or health clinics with a suspected sexually transmitted infection should be offered HIV testing. If the facility does not offer this testing, the patient should be referred to another department that does perform this type of testing. A study regarding HIV testing and referral for patients with STI's found that a lack of knowledge regarding the test's ability interfered with the patient receiving this very important test. Twenty-seven percent of respondents in the aforementioned study stated that HIV testing was not available at the institution of treatment. However, all of the hospital laboratories where respondents were treated were actually capable of performing the test (Fincher-Mergi et al., 2002). This shows a need for health care professionals to offer information and testing to patients, even if the patients are not asking. Patients should also be made aware of the free testing that the Canton City Health Department offers. This free service can aid in the detection of sexually transmitted infections, provide an opportunity for early treatment, referrals, counseling in regards to avoiding transmission of disease, and notification of sexual partners (Campos-Outcalt, Mickey, Weisbuch, & Jones, 2006).

The interventions discussed above are crucial in reducing the spread of sexually transmitted infections within the City of Canton. Should the statistics begin to reflect a drop in the incidence of STI's, and when clinics are continuously treating infections in the beginning or early stages rather than in later, exacerbated stages, it will be apparent that the above interventions have been implemented and are working to change the sexual health of the community.

The second nursing diagnosis for the City of Canton is Ineffective Community Therapeutic Regimen Management related to lack of awareness of availability of resources in the community. This is evidenced by the fact that more than half of live births in Canton were to unmarried mothers, which ultimately leads to the burden of single parenthood; the high percent of families living below the poverty level, which is more for the city in comparison with county and state totals; and lastly, the fact that the highest mortality rates for the city are heart disease and cancer, whose risks can both be significantly decreased with the proper lifestyle changes.

Program development is an important intervention in addressing this diagnosis. Single parenthood can greatly increase one's stress levels, and without the proper support and coping mechanisms, single-parent families may have a decreased ability to function successfully as a family unit. An article that looked at the implementation of a program for single mothers found that the mothers' measured affect and self-esteem were increased through the availability of social encouragement and instruction (Lipman & Boyle, 2005). If a single parent lacks the necessary social support in their families, groups like Parents without Partners and Mother Mentor can be beneficial. The community health nurse can work with social workers to help single parents find these supportive groups, and can also work with single-parent families to

develop new programs that offer support for others in the same situation. Agencies like the Pregnancy Support Center can help parents with young children access these resources as well.

Helping low-income residents and families with financial management is another intervention that can be helpful for the nursing diagnosis of ineffective community therapeutic regimen management. Because there are a large number of families living below the poverty line in Canton, this is a very important intervention, one whose implementation can change many aspects in the lives of Canton's residents. Low income families often live paycheck –to-paycheck and have little means to save money to use to better their financial situation; such as for continuing education, or for buying a home. Several studies have shown that using goal setting, planning, record keeping, controlled spending, and saving can help families build assets (Hogan, Solheim, Wolfgram, Nkosi, & Rodrigues, 2004).

Community health nurses in Canton should work with the Department of Job and Family Services to create a program that offers free financial courses for low-income families. The course could be made mandatory for all adult members of households receiving cash assistance to ensure that it reached the necessary population. This course should focus on how families can better themselves through saving for their future, and how to go about getting started. The Survey of Consumer Finance found that an individual's "planning horizon" had an effect on their ability to save money effectively. Families that planned for a short-term period, a year or less, were only half as likely to save as those who planned for a long term period of several years (Hogan et al., 2004). This point should be stressed when teaching financial asset building to low-income families.

Another financial tool Canton could consider to help low-income families with asset building is to implement a program such as an Individual Development Accounts (IDA)

initiative. This program would have to be set up through Job and Family Services and would be an alternative or complementary program to immediate cash assistance programs like Ohio Works First (OWF). Funds for this program could also come from independent agencies around the community, such as the United Way or women's shelters. In a pilot IDA program in Minnesota called Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) families were required to deposit \$30 monthly and then the program matched the deposit at a 3:1 ratio when the savings is withdrawn to invest in the families' predetermined goals (Hogan et al., 2004). In the FAIM program, half of the funds for families were from state and federal funds, and the other half were from private sources such as community action agencies, tribal councils, credit unions and non-profit organizations. It would be the job of the community health nurse to campaign with other agencies to gain the monetary support of agencies within the community to get the funds necessary to start a similar program. The researchers recommend that the previously mentioned financial management courses be taught to all families participating in a program of this nature.

Health education, screening, and referrals are three more interventions that should be implemented for this community diagnosis. Lack of knowledge about morbidities such as heart disease and cancer can greatly contribute to an individuals' reluctance to seek screening and preventative measures. Clinics within the community and primary care practices should provide extensive patient education on these issues and how to prevent them, either through pamphlets and displays through in the waiting rooms, through a community education day, or just getting healthcare professionals to communicate these issues to patients more effectively. One place in specific where these types of interventions would be effective for the community of Canton is at the Canton Community clinic. Eric Riley, CEO of Canton Community Center (CCC), spoke to the researchers about the changes he saw when CCC became a Federally Qualified Health

Center. Being a Federally Qualified Health Center means it is not a free clinic. Rather, the clients' payments are based upon a sliding scale that takes into account the clients' income and their ability to pay for the services. Since CCC switched over to being Federally Qualified, Eric Riley stated they have actually seen an increase in the amount of people using their services. This type of growth illustrates that there is at least one resource in Canton that is being utilized, and that referrals, screenings, and other health promotion activities would be very effective in reaching Canton's residents if implemented or expanded upon at this location.

Educating the residents of Canton about heart disease should be done across all ages, but to begin teaching heart health to the youth in Canton can be an effective way to reduce future incidences of heart disease. A study of 63 participants aged from 18-21 years found that young people are in fact concerned with the health issue of heart disease, but are not aware of how to prevent the disease from occurring (Vale, 2000). Implementing heart health initiatives in schools and pediatric offices can greatly increase the likelihood that the youth of Canton will begin to understand and act on reducing their own risk for heart diseases. These teachings should include smoking cessation, healthy diets, and physical activity. The reasons for these specific teaching points are that smoking promotes the buildup of coronary plaque and accelerates the development of peripheral arterial disease. Also, high energy intake combined with sedentary lifestyle habits lead to obesity, which is considered the leading predisposing risk factor for coronary heart disease (Grundy, 1999).

Another population that is in great need of education about maintaining a healthy heart is women. More women die from cardiovascular problems than men, and women need to be armed with the necessary information to prevent heart disease. By working with obstetricians and gynecologists, which are health professionals that many women regularly see during

childbearing years and throughout their lifespan, community health nurses can get the needed information about reducing heart disease risk factors to women (Case Management Advisor, 2010). Women's health professionals should encourage women to be knowledgeable and take control of their own heart health by keeping track of their blood pressure, cholesterol level, and sleep and stress patterns.

Screening for heart disease and cancer are also very important in decreasing the incidences of these diseases in Canton. By implementing a program that offers screenings for heart disease and cancer at local clinics, hospitals, and other healthcare settings the incidences of these diseases can be reduced or identified early. Early detection of diseases leads to early diagnosis, which allows for earlier treatment and an increased probability of survival, as well as a reduction in the cost of healthcare (Miller, 2010). A tool that can be used for screening purposes is the Framingham tool. This tool takes into consideration an individual's gender, age, total cholesterol, smoking status, triglycerides, waist size, blood pressure and other factors that all play a part in heart health (Liebman, 2003).

Referrals for physical activity are another important intervention in keeping Canton's residents healthy and free from preventable diseases. It has been found that individuals from ethnic minority, low socio-economic status groups, and those from these groups that are women in particular, are known to be less active and have an increased incidence of poor health (James, Mills, Crone, Johnston, Morrix, & Gidlow, 2009, p. 1008). Because these groups are predominant in Canton, especially those of low socio-economic status, it is important to make referrals for physical activity in a healthcare setting, where they will be more willingly received than just on a casual basis. Physical activity is an important issue to address with the residents of Canton, as even slight increases in physical activity has been linked to reduced blood pressure,

and decreasing an individual's blood pressure can dramatically reduce the likelihood of developing cardiovascular diseases (James et al., 2009). Referrals for physical activity should be made through health checks and can occur when a patient joins a new practice or clinic or at an annual assessment. This allows for the possibility to prevent heart disease risk factors from occurring, rather than treating them when they occur (Graham, Dugdill, & Cable, 2005).

Referrals should also be made to those needing cardiac rehabilitation. Patients with coronary artery disease have greatly underutilized the option of cardiac rehabilitation, which is unfortunate because this treatment can lead to reductions in mortality and recurrent myocardial infarctions (Brown et al., 2009). Community health nurses can educate health care professionals on the importance of making these referrals. Community health nurse's also play an important role in getting cardiac rehabilitation and physical activity to residents of Canton that may not be able to afford or qualify for clinical rehabilitation. An effort to provide community-based recreational center should be initiated, where low-income residents can receive the benefits of physical activity. If the discussed interventions are effective in Canton, there should be a decrease in the new incidences of heart disease and cancer, as well as more cases of the diseases being identified early. This early identification will allow Canton's residents to be treated sooner and therefore less likely to die from these diseases.

By gearing health promotion and disease prevention at whole communities, community health nurses are able to reach a larger patient population and treat cultural and environmental causes for poor health. The researchers are planning to work the AIDs awareness fair present at Kent State University. Based on the findings present in this text, in the near future, the researchers are going to educate the students at Kent State University, Stark Campus about STDs, or STIs, AIDs, and safe sex. Educational pamphlets and condoms, based on the

aforementioned topics will be passed out by the researchers to the students. The researchers' goal is to educate the college population about these topics in order to promote awareness; and therefore, promoting a healthier lifestyle.

This text discussed health concerns and interventions to combat these concerns specific to the City of Canton, Ohio. The researchers believe that these interventions can help better the whole health of the residents of Canton by addressing physical, emotional, and financial aspects of well-being. It is their hope that these interventions one day be put into action by epidemiologist nurses with the Stark County Health Department and that a stronger, healthier City of Canton will be revealed.

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