

Assessment 2: Ethical and Policy Factors in Care Coordination (Script)

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Greetings, and thank you for joining us today. This presentation will delve into the legal and regulatory landscape concerning the welfare of homeless individuals, exploring the ethical considerations and policy implications surrounding care coordination, particularly within homeless shelters. Our main focus is to underscore the importance of ethical considerations and health policies in ensuring seamless care for patients in community settings.

Before we explore the specifics of care coordination for the homeless and the associated policies, let's establish care coordination as the systematic organization of patient care tasks and information sharing among all involved parties to deliver safer and more effective treatment. This presentation will concentrate on homeless shelters and the policies shaping care coordination for homeless individuals.

People experiencing homelessness are among the most vulnerable groups, often presenting with complex medical and psychological needs requiring structured care. According to the Housing and Urban Development (HUD), someone is deemed homeless if they lack stable, permanent, and adequate overnight shelter. With over 500,000 homeless individuals in the US, 35% of whom lack shelter or reside in inadequate locations (Kurata et al., 2020), providing coordinated care becomes challenging due to resource constraints, limited healthcare access, and associated stigma.

Government Policies Impacting Care Coordination

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Government policies significantly influence care coordination for homeless individuals. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010 aimed to improve healthcare access for all Americans. While primarily focusing on health insurance reform and Medicaid expansion, the ACA indirectly affected laws concerning homeless shelters. It introduced Health Home programs, particularly beneficial for homeless individuals with serious health issues (Dickins et al., 2020). Additionally, the ACA established the "Homeless Health Care (HCH)" program, promoting case management and care coordination, ensuring collaboration among healthcare professionals and social service organizations (Lanese et al., 2021).

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 emphasizes protecting the privacy and confidentiality of individual health information. Homeless individuals often face unique health issues classified as sensitive under HIPAA, requiring additional measures to safeguard privacy and prevent stigmatization (Tønnessen et al.).

Certain policies can lead to ethical dilemmas in homeless healthcare. For example, the Documentation Requirement Policy under HIPAA, which mandates residency and citizenship documents for complete healthcare access, poses a moral conflict as homeless individuals may struggle to provide such documentation (Tønnessen et al.).

Policies Presenting Ethical Dilemmas for Care Coordination

Another policy, the ACA, creates a moral dilemma by withholding Medicaid expansion in many states, resulting in a coverage gap for low-income groups, including homeless individuals. This denies access to insurance and Medicaid services, particularly for those without permanent home addresses (Adashi et al.).

The Nursing Code of Ethics serves as a fundamental ethical framework for care coordination, emphasizing the protection of patients' rights, health, and safety, especially crucial when dealing with vulnerable populations. Nurses play a vital role in addressing healthcare disparities based on social determinants and ensuring justice and fair treatment for homeless individuals (Chang, 2019). Adhering to ethical principles enables nurses to provide patient-centered care, respecting autonomy, wellness, and safety (Hanks et al., 2019).

In summary, this presentation has highlighted the importance of care coordination for homeless individuals, examined relevant policies such as the ACA and HIPAA, explored ethical dilemmas arising from these policies, and emphasized the role of the Nursing Code of Ethics in guiding healthcare professionals toward equitable and patient-centered care for the homeless population.

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