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Public Health Determinants

Social Determinants in Health

The availability and safety of transportation has a major impact on a patient's access to healthcare. The Sullivan Center realizes that a patient's access to quality care is severely limited when they have few options of travel to receive it. If a patient is reliant on public transportation, they are limited to walking distance within the range of where the public transportation will take them. If they are sick or elderly or have a physical disability, this severely limits their ability to walk to a healthcare provider. In rural towns, like Clemson's surrounding areas, quality healthcare facilities aren't located in central locations and may be too far for patients with limited or no access to transportation to travel to. These individuals tend to be at risk for chronic conditions and have lower health overall. The Sullivan Center meets this need for the underserved populations in the community by traveling to sites that are closer to patients' houses and offering free clinics, health promotional events, and preventative screenings. Since the Sullivan Center serves many of the low or no-income individuals in the surrounding areas, their supplies are mostly disposable and easily transportable. The staff prepares each week to pack up enough supplies to travel to the nearby towns and perform basic acute care and preventative

screenings. The Sullivan Center also has a Mobile Clinic that can be driven to meet the needs of their patients in rural areas if safe healthcare facilities are not available. By having supplies that are easily movable and offering health care to patients near to where they live, the Sullivan Center tries to meet the need for those who have limited transportation.

The options for physical activity are also limited for some of the patients that are served by the Sullivan Center. These patients may live in communities that don't have sidewalks or parks that they can get out and exercise in. Most of these patients also can't afford access to health clubs or exercise equipment. For some of those patients, it may be unsafe to run or walk near their residency, making options for physical activity extremely limited. Other patients in rural areas may not be aware of the safe options for physical activity in their community. These patients tend to have low or no income and a lower health status. The Sullivan Center recognizes the need for patients to have availability for safe ways to be physically active and tries to overcome this barrier in the ways that it provides care. In many of the off-site clinics, the center provides stretchy bands with instructions to women to give them a way to exercise at home, regardless of where they live. Another way that they try to promote healthy living habits is by providing packets with information about local walking trails, public parks, free gyms, and other locations for physical activity that are tailored to the patient's area of residence. This helps notify patients of their options to be physically active and empowers them to make healthy choices about their physical activity.

Organizational Behavior and Governance

One of the most critical roles of the Sullivan Center is that it provides a place of innovative, real-life student learning to those that work there. Many of those that work at the Sullivan Center are also students looking to further their education. Nurses who are working on becoming nurse practitioners at the university offer their services to work with the trained professionals to help give care to the patients at the Sullivan Center. Interns from the Nursing and Health Science departments offer free service in exchange for real-life healthcare experience in order to allow the center to see more patients and to run more smoothly. Both the students and the Sullivan Center benefit from offering students a place to learn more about healthcare and to gain real-life experience.

Though the center promotes a learning-focused atmosphere, its own organizational culture contradicts its values at times. Much of this contradiction comes from the common healthcare mentality of seeing as many patients as possible to maximize revenue. With this mentality, student interns and volunteer nurses become more inconveniences rather than teachable students to the trained healthcare professionals that work in the center. This hinders the ability of the trainees to ask questions to allow them to gain more knowledge when they are expected to know best practices and the clinical workflow, even when they don't. Another aspect of healthcare that limits the ability of the Sullivan Center to create a learning-centered environment is the policies and laws when it comes to coding and documenting clinical encounters. Student interns and nurse volunteers work at the center for only a few days or weeks at a time. During this time they are exposed to many complicated health care practices and are

expected to pick them up quickly. Most of the time it is possible, but because of the high rate of malpractice in the healthcare industry, there is a heavy emphasis on students learning correct documentation of their encounters with patients. It takes large amounts of time to train students to document and code correctly, therefore limiting the capacity hands-on work they can do with patients, as well as a slow adaptation rate potentially deterring new student learners from volunteering.

If I could change the organizational function to make the system at the Sullivan Center more effective, the first thing I would change would be the orientation process. It would be more beneficial for student interns to be trained in their positions as well as clinical workflow and how the policy/ law regulations affect them and their jobs. The next thing I would change is the attitude towards documentation versus patient interaction. Health care preaches patient-centered care and the Sullivan Center preaches learning-centered practice, but with the policies in place and the need to maximize output, less time is spent caring for patients and more time is spent on correct documentation and quick interactions. More emphasis should be placed on efficient care of patients without sacrificing the vital patient interaction.

Concentration-Specific Questions

Professionalism was an important component of what I learned at the Sullivan Center. Dealing with the staff and patients in a professional and respectable way was something that I learned from the medical professionals there. The nurse practitioners that I worked with were mature and handled

themselves in a respectable manner, especially in situations where I needed correction. If there was a piece of criticism or advice they had for me, they always spoke with me maturely, understanding that I was a capable adult, but also with grace, understanding that I was still a learning student. They clearly communicated where the mistake was made and what they expected to happen in place of that. Because the nurse practitioners were confident in their ways, yet treated me with respect and understanding, I felt that they handled situations of correction in a professional way. I learned that the importance of professionalism among coworkers is letting them know that they are valued members of a team and that you respect their professional opinion.

Professionalism is also important in dealing with and working around patients. We had a situation during my internship where a student nurse spoke to a provider in an unprofessional way in front of patients. This situation was handled with an email that was sent to the student interns informing them of the event and letting them know the correct way that the situation should have been handled. Professionalism is important especially in front of patients because it helps them trust your professional opinion and allows them to feel at ease with your care. It is also important to treat patients professionally for the same reasons.

From the internship, I have learned the importance of professionalism as well as ways to improve my own professionalism. One thing I'm comfortable with is calling adult friends by their first name. I believe that it is important for healthcare professionals to be referred to by their proper surname to indicate respect for them and the knowledge that they have. I have also learned how to

communicate in a professional way to patients about uncomfortable healthcare topics. Many patients come to the Sullivan Center for acute illnesses that are difficult for them to talk about or have to explain health history that might be uncomfortable for them to say. Through encountering many of these situations, I have seen how to best handle these scenarios of talking about uncomfortable topics in a straightforward manner with as much ease as possible.

Professionalism is crucial to all aspects of healthcare.