

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKER IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Health care social work is a branch of social work often referred to as hospital social work. Medical social workers usually operate in a hospital, outpatient clinic, community health organization, skilled nursing home, long-term care center, or hospice. They assist patients and their families requiring psychosocial support. Medical social workers evaluate the psychosocial well-being of patients and families and provide interventions when needed. Interventions might involve linking patients and families to essential community resources and support such as preventive care; offering psychotherapy, supportive counseling, or grief counseling; or assisting a patient in broadening and reinforcing their social support network. The function of a medical social worker is to "reestablish equilibrium in a person's personal, familial, and social spheres, with the aim of assisting the individual in preserving or regaining health and enhancing their capacity to adjust and reintegrate into the community." Experts in this area usually collaborate with other fields like medicine, nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and recreational therapy.

Keywords: public healthcare, social work; prevention, Affordable Care act, Health inequalities.

INTRODUCTION

Social work and public health appear similar, given their shared historic core missions to promote social justice and enhance community well-being. While the two professions have a long history of working together on complex social health problems, they also differ significantly in orientation, approach, and current practice.

Social work defines itself as a profession dedicated to

- a. The restoration and enhancement of human social functioning and
- b. The promotion of change in social conditions to reduce human suffering. Based on the values of respect for equality, worth, and dignity of human beings, social work uses a human rights and social justice orientation to address the complex needs of people in their environments.

The social workers are involved in the process of making referrals to link a family or person to needed resources do not simply provide information. They follow up to be sure the needed resources are attained. Currently, health care social workers provide services across the continuum of care in various settings. They are present in public health, acute and chronic care settings providing a range of services including health education, crisis intervention, supportive counseling, and case management. In response to critical incidents that are both global and national, health care social workers are increasingly trained to provide interventions to prepare for and respond to traumatic events and disasters.

OVERVIEW OF FUNCTIONS

Hospital social workers help patients and their families understand a particular illness, work through the emotions of a diagnosis, and provide counseling about the decisions that need to

be made. Social workers are also essential members of interdisciplinary hospital teams. Working in concert with doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals, social workers sensitize other health care providers to the social and emotional aspects of a patient's illness. Hospital social workers use case management skills to help patients and their families address and resolve the social, financial and psychological problems related to their health condition. Job functions that a social worker might perform within a hospital include:

- a. Initial screening and evaluation of patient and families;
- b. Comprehensive psychosocial assessment of patients;
- c. Helping patients and families understand the illness and treatment options, as well as consequences of various treatments or treatment refusal;
- d. Helping patients/families adjust to hospital admission; possible role changes; exploring emotional/social responses to illness and treatment;
- e. Educating patients on the roles of health care team members; assisting patients and families in communicating with one another and to members of health care team; interpreting information

HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK IN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Social workers from the twentieth century have been involved in health care system such as providing services for poor people, worked with the elderly and patients with tuberculosis. In 1977, the World Association of Social Work published standards for the provision of health care services in hospitals and in 1980, the standards for social workers in health centers developed and it replaced hospital standards. Between 1981 and 1982, the National Association of Social Work Board's new developed standards approved and added to the previous standard of care. These standards include the activities of social workers in the field of kidney patient, disability, treatment and health care and followed by social workers into the health care system and the public and private sectors were engaged. More activities of social workers concentrate on transferring the patient or refer him or her to home and in some cases solve the financial problems.

Social Workers Standards in Health Care System Journal of the National Association of Social Work in Health Care expressed standards for social workers considered that some of them are:

- i. Ethics and Values
- ii. Health inequalities
- iii. Cultural Competence
- iv. Privacy professionals
- v. Knowledge

Most of these standards, the role of social work in the health care system has been investigated. Therefore, according to this definition, one-dimensional view of the patient and the patient is almost obsolete.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF WORKING IN A HOSPITAL OR MEDICAL CENTER HOSPITAL

Social workers view the opportunity to make an immediate, positive impact in the life of an individual or family, as one of the unique benefits of the job. Individuals who enjoy working

in fast-paced environments, and those who are interested in cutting edge medical interventions, often enjoy hospital social work. Hospital social workers enjoy interdisciplinary work settings, and often derive personal satisfaction from being the member of the health care team who offers the “person-in-environment” perspective,” which incorporates all the factors that influence a patient’s health care experience. Hospital social workers report an increase in the severity of client problems, caseload size, paperwork and waiting lists for services (Whitaker, et al, 2006). In recent years, there has been an increase in closures of hospital social work departments, with social work staff being reassigned to other departments, or eliminating these positions altogether and re-assigning social work task to other professions. In certain cases, such reorganization has replaced departmental directors with non-social work personnel, raising questions about proper social work supervision.

THE PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

On March 29, 2010, President Barack Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PL 111-148) (ACA) into law, marking the beginning of major reforms that will

- provide nearly universal access to health insurance coverage,
- increase access to affordable health care for millions of US citizens, and will
- Transform the way that health care is delivered in the United States.

There are opportunities for social workers to play a leading role in the delivery of care. We begin by explaining the major changes in health care established by the ACA and by summarizing related legislation that has informed the ACA. Then, we discuss the results of recent demonstration projects which provide evidence of the cost effectiveness of new healthcare service delivery models. We emphasize the potential for social work in implementation of the new models. Next, ethnic and racial healthcare disparities are examined which suggest that even with health insurance, healthcare access and quality inequities remain among disadvantaged groups. We then turn to a detailed explanation of the potential roles for social workers under the ACA. Current policies that support the implementation of health care reform will be discussed, “A Bridge to Health Care Reform”.

THE PATIENT PROTECTION & AFFORDABLE CARE ACT: MAJOR CHANGES IN HEALTH CARE DELIVERY

In the coming decade, through the provisions of the ACA over 31 million previously uninsured people are expected to be able to access health care insurance. It is expected that a significant proportion of this population will have chronic and serious physical and behavioral health disorders. At the same time, the law will redirect the system that has primarily focused on treatment of and aftercare for existing diseases to focus on primary care and prevention.

In addition, the ACA calls for greater accountability and evidence-based approaches to treatment: it goes without saying that evaluation is a major part of health care reform. Social work is specifically noted in the establishment of interdisciplinary teams to support the medical home concept (section 3502) and as a component of area health education centers (AHECs). The law also names health care social work participation with persons across the life span (children and youth, families and geriatrics).

PUBLIC HEALTH SOCIAL WORKERS WILL DEMONSTRATE KNOWLEDGE AND ADHERE TO

- ❖ Applying management and organizational theories and practices to the development, planning, budgeting, staffing, administration and evaluation of public health

programs including the implementation of strategies promoting integrated service systems, especially for vulnerable populations.

- ❖ Macro-level public health social work practice methods in the promotion and enforcement of regulations (policies and legislation) formulated to protect the health and safety of at-risk populations.
- ❖ Organizational culture and change.
- ❖ Social work community organization and coalition building to address the issues of social and health disparities
- ❖ Commit to individuals, families and communities and the diverse cultural values they hold.
- ❖ The principles of social epidemiology.
- ❖ The principles and theories of population-based health promotion and empowerment.

ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK IN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

- ❖ Planning in order to identify issues and constraints created by the families of patients and how to deal with it.
- ❖ Participate in medical teams and provide information on issues and problems that can be effective in making decisions
- ❖ Coordinated in collaboration with the medical team in order to improve the patient and the medical team cooperation with social worker.
- ❖ Emphasis on group work with patients who are hospitalized for long time.
- ❖ Support after discharge.
- ❖ Social services at home (Home care)
- ❖ Follow Legal Affairs patients.
- ❖ Investigate and solve the health problems of patients admitted to care centers.
- ❖ Get introduced to guide patients admitted for medical and paramedical clinics and other medical institutions.

GOVERNMENT PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVES

In 2006, the Public Health Foundation of India was started by the Prime Minister of India as both a private and public initiative. The goal of this organisation is to incorporate more public health policies and diverse professionals into the healthcare sphere. PHFI is also collaborating with international public health organisations to gather more knowledge and direct discussions around needs and improvements to the current system. Often times officials in policy making positions have a gap in their education about public health, and MPH and PhD programs in public health are lacking in their number of students and resources. PHFI aims to further these programs and educate more people in this field. The research discovered would be made transparent to the Indian public at large, so that the entire nation is aware of health standards in the country.

GOALS OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN HEALTH CARE

The objectives in the field of health care in general is the specific mode and influenced policy, attitudes, ideologies, values and scholars in this field. But the concept of social work

intervention aims to improve the social functioning of the health care so the goals and roles of social work will become clearer below:

- ✓ Evaluation of stress on psychological, social, emotional and physical environment for patients and their families may encounter and provide assistance to them directly.
- ✓ Play the role of counselor, advocate, liaison, mediation and helping patients to make optimal use of health care programs.
- ✓ Providing health care programs, including prevention programs and improving the quality of life in a way that is applicable and accessible to all patients and members of the community.
- ✓ Human and social support programs for the benefit of needy patients.
- ✓ Create interaction and communication between health care personnel and patients treated with the positive cooperation between them is obtained.

DRAWBACKS

Low quality care

Enforcement and revision of the regulations set by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare IPHS is also not strict. The 12th Five-year Plan in India dictates a need to improve enforcement and institutionalize treatment methods across all clinics in the nation in order to increase the quality of care. There is also a lack of accountability across both private and public clinics in India, although public doctors feel less responsibility to treat their patients effectively than do doctors in private clinics. Impolite interactions from the clinic staff may lead to less effective procedures.

Corruption

Healthcare professionals take more time off from work than the amount they are allotted with the majority of absences being for no official reason. India's public healthcare system pays salaries during absences, leading to excessive personal days being paid for by the government. This phenomenon is especially heightened in Sub Centres and PHCs and results in expenditure that isn't correlated to better work performance.

Overcrowding of clinics

Clinics are overcrowded and understaffed without enough beds to support their patients. Statistics show that the number of health professionals in India is less than the average number for other developing nations. In rural Bihar the number of doctors is 0.3 for every 10,000 individuals. Urban hospitals have twice the number of beds than rural hospitals do but the number is still insufficient to provide for the large number of patients that visit. Sometimes patients are referred from rural areas to larger hospitals, increasing the overcrowding in urban cities.

Barriers of access

Both social and financial inequality results in barriers of access to healthcare services in India. Services aren't accessible for the disabled, mentally challenged, and elderly populations. Mothers are disadvantaged and in many rural areas there is a lack of abortion services and contraception methods. Public clinics often have a shortage of the appropriate medicines or may supply them at excessively high prices, resulting in large out of pocket costs (even for those with insurance coverage). Large distances prevent Indians from getting

care, and if families travel the far distance there is low assurance that they will receive proper proper medical attention at that time

PUBLIC HEALTH SOCIAL WORKERS SHOULD DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING SKILLS

- Recognize various strengths, needs, values and practices of diverse cultural, racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups to determine .how these factors affect health status, health behaviours and program design.
- Application of primary, secondary and tertiary strategies to address the health, social and economic issues of individuals, families and communities.
- Utilize practice and epidemiologic theories to substantiate interventions and programming designed to promote health and behavioural change.
- The use of data to illuminate ethical, political, scientific, economic, social and overall public health issues.
- Principles and key features of community needs assessment, program design, Implementation and evaluations.
- Collection and interpretation of data from vital statistics, censuses, surveys, service utilization and other relevant reports on social and health status for all, especially vulnerable and underserved populations.

CONCLUSION

Social workers have the responsibilities of implement intervention and treatment plans that promote client well-being and ensure a continuum of care. Planning shall be based on a comprehensive, culturally competent assessment with interdisciplinary input. Interpretation Intervention and treatment plans are steps identified by the health social worker, in collaboration with the client and with other members of the team, to achieve objectives identified during assessment.

The contributions social work makes to development are many and varied. Studies on public health social work are increasing in social work awareness of the dedicated field still needs to increase in both public health and social work circles. The Group for Public Health Social Work Initiatives hopes to promote many programs, initiate a national dialogue on public health social work, and conduct and disseminate research. Social Work can rise to the challenges faced by the public health field in the near future. Training in both public health and social work becomes more important and relevant to solving the ongoing interrelated problems in health and human services. Recent political changes are expected to affect the future delivery of healthcare, possibly leading to more emphasis on preventive healthcare and integrated healthcare and wellness services. The ability of the public health social worker to bridge prevention and intervention, individual and community, and practice and policy will be increasingly valued by our changing society.

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