

ANNOUNCEMENT

Master's Oral Examination for

Melinda Barney

Monday, April 19, 2021, 9-10:00 am

Zoom

Factors that Promote the Street Medicine Program in Cowlitz County, WA, US

Abstract

Chair: Dr. Natsuko Wood

Aim: To develop a sustainable, Street Medicine program for the homeless population in Cowlitz County providing basic and preventable healthcare services.

Background: The homeless community at large faces many barriers in accessing adequate healthcare. Behavioral health needs, competing priorities, societal stigma, negative experiences with healthcare providers, and the complex time-bound nature of our medical system discourages use of our current healthcare system by unsheltered individuals. Street Medicine programs have been shown to fill this healthcare gap for homeless populations by offering a human connection, providing a bridge to healthcare, and connecting patients with needed community resources.

Methods: A literature review was conducted using multiple databases through Washington State Universities (WSU) online library. 10 journal articles focused on creating a sustainable program, assessing the medical needs of the homeless population, and understanding the multiple drivers of homelessness. Google search provided 2 sources with demographics pertinent to the Cowlitz County. The main foci of the literature review was to identify what barriers in healthcare are leading to care avoidance, establish the need to address healthcare for homeless populations, and identify essential elements of building an effective and sustainable Street Medicine program.

Implications for Nursing: By bringing healthcare to vulnerable populations, healthcare providers can address basic health needs, provide community resources that will improve the quality of life for unsheltered individuals, and provide relief for community healthcare systems.

Key words: homeless, street programs, barriers to care