

A Nurse Practitioner Reflection on Community Care for Marginalised Children

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Background

Nurse Practitioners provide cost effective health care interventions for marginalised and difficult to reach populations. Children aged 0-14 years represented 23% of the total population receiving support from specialist homeless services in 2017-2018. The impact of housing instability on Australian children is considerable, leading to disengagement from social institutions such as health and education and poorer physical and mental health outcomes across the life span.

Aim

Current services poorly address the needs of children facing situations which increase marginalisation such as housing instability, this presentation provides a Nurse Practitioner's reflections on the provision of care, the interdisciplinary and Non-Government Organisational collaborations and the presenting conditions and their potential causes.

Methods

This reflection uses a case study methodology. The Nurse Practitioner provided an extensive health assessment using a standardised tool. Data from the standardised tool, such as condition and severity were recorded in a spreadsheet to determine common condition. In addition, comprehensive case notes were recorded by the Nurse Practitioner. The case notes and assessment data were triangulated and then considered against academic literature to determine potential causes of the common presenting conditions.

Results

The Nurse Practitioner noted the extensive community engagement varied across the GP, Specialist and NGO sectors often requiring broad consultations and commitment from multiple service providers. The service cared for 78 children, assessed between 2019-2020; ages ranged from 7 weeks to 17 years with an approximate 50-50 gender split. The children presented with developmental delay, low immunisation rates and dental caries. Access to appropriate services was inhibited by cost, disengagement, and COVID-19.

Conclusions

This presentation focuses on an in-depth case study of one participant, presenting how healthcare costs and disengagement can impact a child's health. Nurse Practitioners are perfectly positioned to help vulnerable children, with their advanced clinical skills and expanded knowledge of local health networks, they can increase children's access to health care.