Caring For Vulnerable Patients in the Era of Health Reform

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Objectives
- Review impact of ACA on underserved populations
- Deconstruct the construct of vulnerable populations
- Present an integrated approach to vulnerable patients
- Provide 3 examples of social vulnerabilities & impacts
  - Limited health literacy
  - Food insecurity
  - Intimate Partner Violence
- Find joy and a feeling of alignment in one’s work

ACA reduced uninsured by 50% and increased Medicaid by 36%

Drops in the uninsured rolls much greater for minorities

By race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Uninsured</th>
<th>Medicaid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HISPANIC</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHITE</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIAN</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Drops in the uninsured rolls much greater for the poor

Vulnerable Populations Defined

- Vulnerable Populations are subgroups of the larger population that, because of social, economic, political, structural and historical forces, are exposed to “greater risk of risks”, and are thereby at a disadvantage with respect to their health and health care.

Exemplar Case

- Ms J is a 57 yo English-speaking Latina, mother of 5, with 3 grandchildren, with HTN, depression, DJD and IDDM with A1c of 8.6%. She presents for the first time after having been hospitalized for 3 days for hypoglycemia. The inpatient service was unable to identify a trigger for the hypoglycemia.

- Question for you is WHY?

Mnemonic Devices Can Make you a Better Clinician!

- **My**
- **Neurons**
- **Erase**
- **Memory**
- **Only**
- **Names**
- **Improve**
- **Cognition**
Common Social Vulnerabilities

- Violence
- Uninsured
- Literacy and Language
- Neglect
- Economic hardship/food insecurity
- Race/ethnic discordance, discrimination
- Addiction
- Mental disorders, e.g. depression, dementia
- Immigrant
- Legal status
- Isolation/Informal caregiving burden
- Transportation problems
- Illness Model
- Age and Ears
- Shelter

What are We Up Against?
Reversing The Inverse Care Law

“Access to and quality of healthcare is inversely proportional to the needs of the population”

- Tudor-Hart, 1971

“Somebody has to do something, and it’s just incredibly pathetic that it has to be us.”

Jerry Garcia

3 Mechanisms Whereby Vulnerability is Associated with Poor Health

1. Vulnerability
2. Disease State
3. Therapeutic Alliance
4. Health Outcome

Schillinger et al 2007
Finding the Sweet Spot for Effective Intervention with Vulnerable Patients

This approach uniformly allows a clinician to navigate the social distance and create the human connection that underlies therapeutic relationships.

Finding Resilience

- Religion
- Expertise/Employment
- Social support & Network
- Intimates
- Laughter
- Institutions
- Energy & Enthusiam
- Navigate Life’s Difficulties
- Cultural Assets
- Entertainment/Enjoyment

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- Eyes and Ears
- Shelter
What is Health Literacy?

- "The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make [informed] health decisions."
- 3 domains: oral (speaking, listening); written (reading, writing); numerical (quantitative)
- ?Web? Patient portals?
- Capacity/Preparedness ↔ Demand Mismatch

Patients with Diabetes and Low Literacy Less Likely to Know Correct Management

Need to Know:
symptoms of low blood sugar (hypoglycemia)

Need to Do:
correct action for hypoglycemic symptoms

Exemplar Case: Clearly this was Limited Health Literacy, right?

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- Illness Model
- yes and Ears
- shelter

Schillinger 2007

The Old Face of Hunger

- The uneasy or painful sensation caused by lack of food, or the recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food.

The New Face of Food Insecurity

- The limited or uncertain
  - availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or
  - ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways

Life Sciences Research Organization

Cycles of Food Adequacy & Inadequacy Wreak Havoc

- Compensatory Strategies during Food Adequacy
  - Avoidance of food waste
  - Systematic overconsumption
- Compensatory Strategies during Food Shortage
  - Skipped meals
  - Reduced caloric intake

Hyperglycemia Hypoglycemia
Cycles of Food Adequacy & Inadequacy Wreak Havoc

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Hyperglycemia → Hypoglycemia

Hypoglycemia & Food Insecurity

- Patients with diabetes in a safety net hospital
  - 1/3 of those who reported hypoglycemia attributed it to the inability to afford food

- Primary care patients with diabetes at community health centers (38% food insecure)
  - Blood sugar ever gotten too low because you couldn’t afford food? (33% FI vs. 5% FS)
  - Ever been to the ER because your blood sugar was too low? (28% FI vs. 5% FS)


Risk Factors for Severe Hypoglycemia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>AOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Insecurity</td>
<td>3.0 (1.5-5.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol abuse</td>
<td>2.2 (1.1-4.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comorbid illnesses</td>
<td>1.5 (1.1-2.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td>0.3 (0.1-0.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seligman, Arch Int Med, 2011

Exemplar Case: Clearly this was Food Insecurity, right?

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What is intimate partner violence (IPV)?

PATTERN of abusive behaviors:
- Including physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, economic, and/or psychological abuse
- Includes interfering with medical care
- Used by adults or adolescents
- Against current or former intimate partners, and sometimes against other family members
- In ANY intimate relationship: LGBTQ/straight/all gender identities

Exemplar Case: Clearly this was Intimate Partner Violence, right?

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Where Have We Been?

- Deconstruct the construct of vulnerable populations
- Present an integrated approach to care of vulnerable patients
- Provide 3 examples of social vulnerabilities & DM
  - Limited health literacy
  - Food insecurity
  - Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
- Find the joy and a feeling of alignment in one’s work
Care of Vulnerable Patients

“There needs to be a little Don Quixote in all health practitioners... locked in on the mission, undaunted by the doubters and the half-hearted”

- Fitzhugh Mullan, MD

Interrupting the Cycles of Vulnerability & Poor Health

TWO DEAD MEN
A POEM....

One: a refugee from Cuba.
Always in white,
Skin black and smooth,
Fitting the mold from bottom top:
White leather shoes,
White pants,
White linen shirt,
Crowned with a Havana,
Of course.

The First: always smiling,
Laughing even.
Gold sparkling from a tooth.
Bejeweled with bling
Like epaulettes
From his favorite pastime:
Reno with Maria

The Second: never sure of his age,
Either 93 or 88,
His Louisiana birth certificate,
Unable to read it,
But he knows it bears false witness.
Keeps his daughter’s number safe:
Pearline - on the inside brim
Of his omnipresent
Baseball cap.
The Former: still alive
‘Cause he quit tobacco 25 years ago
After being filleted open
To plumb his heart.
Proud of his medical survival skills,
And grateful for his doctor.
While smacking his big round belly,
Pregnant with hope and worry.

The Latter: still alive
Because he quit smoking 25 years ago
After being told his lungs are vanishing.
Owe my life to my doctor,
So he says and so he believes.
Now chained to an oxygen tank,
Not sure if it’s worth it,
Anymore.

Two Brothers, Resilient,
Living in parallel,
Struggling in parallel,
Full lives behind them.
Now both suddenly dead,
Within days of each other.
Leaving behind their doctor

How can it be
That these two men,
Bedeviled by society
Could become the favorites
Of their doctor?
What can fill the absences,
When one is robbed of one’s favorites
And their love is lost?

END