Meeting the Needs of a Segment of Boston’s Homeless Population: The Philippine Medical Association (PMA) Wellness Program (PWP)

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PWP Serves the Homeless Population Around the Greater Boston Area

- Events are held in Emmanuel Church (15 Newbury St., Boston, MA)
  - Easily accessible to those who live in Boston and do not have easy access to transportation
- While most attendees are homeless, everyone is welcomed, regardless of race, age or class
Key Demographics Based on a Recent Survey

- **Age and Gender**
  - Male:Female ratio: 4:1
  - >80% are between the age of 50-70

- **Housing Status**
  - *Homeless*
    - 65% living in the street
    - 35% living in a shelter
  - *Housed*
    - 50% renting
    - 8% living in grouped home
    - 42% living with friends/family
Social and Structural Factors Influencing the Health of this Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of Social Support</th>
<th>Structural Issues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many are disconnected from family</td>
<td>Difficulty of achieving housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of social support from government</td>
<td>No easy access to transportation and communication</td>
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<td>Lack of respect from general public</td>
<td>Lack of steady income prevents people from basic needs</td>
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Common Medical Risk Exposures

- Infections
  - Influenza
  - Pneumonia
  - HIV and hepatitis (blood-borne infections)

- Injuries

- Weather-related health risks
  - Frostbite
  - Heatstroke
Common Social Risk Exposures

- Smoking related morbidities
  - COPD
  - Lung cancer
- Opiate addiction
- Malnourishment and unhealthy diet
- Lack of exercise
- Sleep deprivation
- Living in a constant, high-stress environment
Interprofessional teams of care

- Physicians
- Advocates
- Attorneys
- Behavioral health professionals
- Faith based ministers
- Housing specialists
- Nurse practitioners and physician assistants
- Case managers

Interprofessional care team for individuals experiencing homelessness
Health Advocacy

- Prevent homelessness
- Connect individuals in need to health & social services
- Increase funding for state & local agencies that support people experiencing homelessness
Health Advocacy

Work with local, state and national organizations on behalf of people at-risk of or experiencing homelessness; advocate to Massachusetts Senate and House of Representatives
Health Advocacy

- How can healthcare providers be involved in advocacy for people experiencing homelessness?
  - Be informed about local, state and national elections
  - Get to know the community directly
Service & experiential learning

1. Spending time with community members and listening to their stories
2. Understanding what services are available to this population
3. Learning about Individual and system advocacy
Service & experiential learning

Giving back to PWP:
- Designed and will lead interactive health education talk on 11/16 re: cold related conditions
- Prepared 48 backpack care kits that will be distributed on 11/16
- Updated the needs assessment surveys
- Coordinated live music volunteers for future PWP
- Organized and compiled PWP resources on medical care, shelters, soup kitchens and housing opportunities

Reflection:
- Worcester vs. Boston
- Away elective at BHCHP during 4th year
- A new medical model: BHCHP’s Coordinated Care Hub
Acknowledgements

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