

Nursing Students' Attitudes Towards the Homeless

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Aims

To examine nursing students' attitudes towards the homeless

To determine whether previous exposure to the homeless influences attitudes of nursing students towards the homeless

BACKGROUND

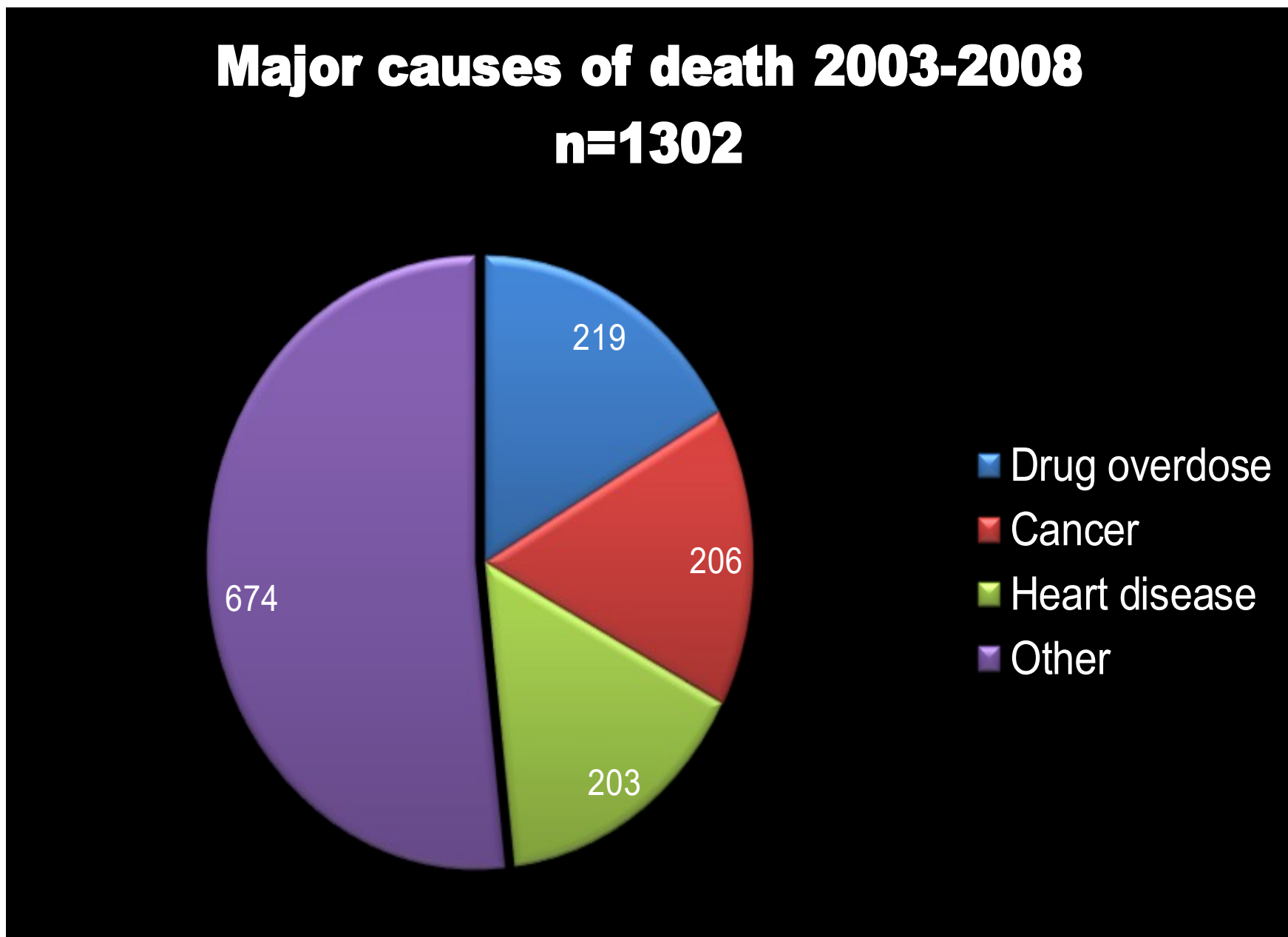
U.S. HOMELESS PATIENTS

Social Challenges

- . Lack of financial resources
- . Difficulty adhering to a healthy diet
- . Hygiene issues
- . Lack of storage for personal items
- .

Health Challenges

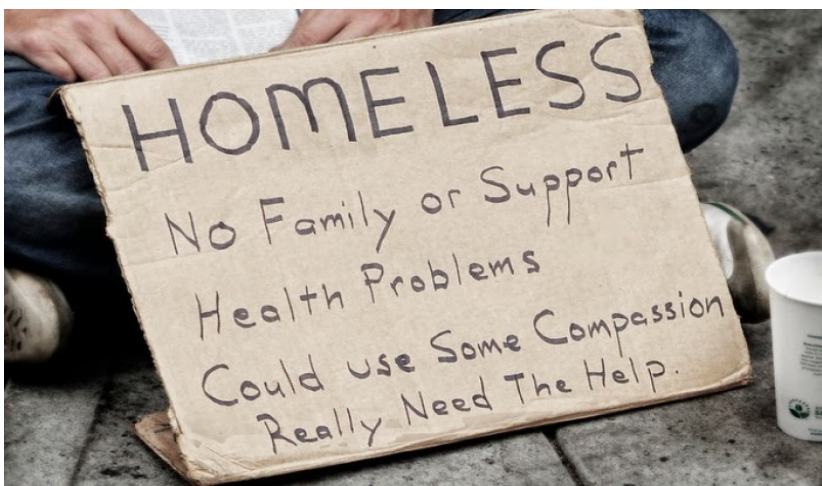
- . For serious health conditions (cardiac disease, cancer, and substance abuse disorders), higher risk of mortality
- . Overall higher risk of mortality than general population
- . Higher admission rates and longer lengths of hospital stays



YOUNGER HOMELESS ADULTS (25-44 YEAR OLD)
9 times greater risk of dying than the general population
MIDLIFE HOMELESS ADULTS (45-64 YEAR OLD)
4.5 times greater risk of dying than general population

Nursing Training

- . Clinical training rotations with the homeless are not part of the standard U.S. nursing curriculum.
- . Clinical experience in a homeless setting may provide a more accepting attitude of working with this growing population.



METHODS

SURVEY

- . Validated survey- Attitudes Towards Homelessness Inventory (ATHI, Kingree and Daves, 1997)
- . Includes 4 sub categories, 1) personal causation, 2) societal causation, 3) affiliation and, 4) solutions
- . Email to 125 US second degree Masters- level nursing students
- . 13 respondents participated in the 11 item survey.

RESULTS

Survey Statement	Sub-category	Mean Score
Homeless people had parents who took little interest in them as children.	PC	4.53
Most circumstances of homelessness in adults can be traced to their emotional experiences in childhood.	PC	3.38
Most homeless persons are substance abusers.	PC	4.46
Recent government cutbacks in housing assistance for the poor may have made the homeless problem in this country worse.	SC	2.07
The low minimum wage in this country virtually guarantees a large homeless population.	SC	2.76
Recent government cutbacks in welfare have contributed substantially to the homeless problem in this country.	SC	2.69
I feel uneasy when I meet homeless people.	AFF	4.76
I would feel comfortable eating a meal with a homeless person.	AFF	2
Rehabilitation programs for homeless people are too expensive to operate.	SOL	5.30
There is little that can be done for people in homeless shelters except to see they are comfortable and well fed.	SOL	5.61
A homeless person cannot really be expected to adopt a normal lifestyle.	SOL	5.23
Attitude toward homeless index (11-66)		42.8

the higher the number the more positive the attitude

- . Overall scores of attitude range 39-46, mean 42.8, out of possible 66—indicating an overall positive attitude
- . Perception homelessness based more on societal causes (mean 2.51) than personal causes (mean 4.12)
- . Eleven of the twelve respondents had previous experience with homeless. Correlated to positive attitude (mean 3.38) and a positive perspective towards solutions for homelessness (mean 5.38)

CONCLUSION

Understanding a vulnerable population such as the homeless and acknowledging the effects of negative attitudes towards the delivery of care would provide insight to both educators and students.