

American Assembly for Men in Nursing Position Statement
Position Statement on Men's Health Curriculum in Schools of Nursing

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Public Comments Incorporated and Final Edits Made by Position Statement Taskforce

Purpose

The purpose of this statement is to call for schools of nursing to develop a men's health curriculum as part of basic nursing preparation as well as for advanced practice nursing preparation and to provide recommendations for such a curriculum. This statement also challenges nurse educators to critique current nursing education curricula to assure that content distribution related to women's and men's health is equitable.

Statement of AAMN Position

Recognizing a need for nurses to be more knowledgeable about men's health and the factors that both contribute to and inhibit men's health, the American Assembly for Men in Nursing believes that the introduction of a men's health curriculum into schools of nursing is needed to assist professional nurses in fulfilling their roles responsibly and for enhancing the health and wellness of men.

Supporting Men' Health

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has begun to address the need for more dissemination of men's health issues. AHRQ has started a campaign called "Real Men Wear Gowns" (<http://www.ahrq.gov/realmen/>.) However, most agencies, such as The National Quality Forum and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid contain sections on health problems related to men listed by disease, not by gender. It is common, however, to see diseases affecting women grouped under the identifier of "women's health" (<http://www.qualityforum.org/Topics/Disparities.aspx>). Rarer still is information about how men make health decisions.

The paucity of literature pertaining to men's health demonstrates the glaring absence of health care policies addressing men's health, and the lack of healthcare options available for men underscore the need for a greater focus on men's health. Some of the published studies addressing gender influence on healthcare focus on women's health or low income and minority groups (Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2005). While men are usually research subjects, they are rarely the subjects of research.

Limited healthcare resources, inequitable options available to men in seeking healthcare, and the absence of policies addressing gender specific issues such as learning styles, masculinity, influences of testosterone on health, and stereotypical male traits, such as risk taking behaviors, underscore the need for further studies and a better understanding of men's health (Perle, Salzman, & Schaefer, 2006). Additionally, healthcare systems are not designed to provide male specific services. The Men's Health Network (2008) cites several statistics demonstrating overall information regarding male morbidity throughout the lifespan.

It is commonly known that the leading causes of death in men are (1) heart disease, (2) cancer, and (3) unintentional; whereas, the leading causes of death in women are (1) heart disease, breast cancer, and stroke (CDC, 2007). Healthy People 2020 identify objectives specifically targeting males some of which include, decreasing incidence of prostate related deaths and improving reproductive health for men (Healthy People, 2009). Other broad Healthy People 2020 objectives address other health care needs for men including increasing the frequency of primary care provider visits, improving cardiovascular health, and increasing health prevention activities (Healthy People, 2009)

Factors Impacting Men' Health Seeking Behaviors

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, men are two and a half times less likely to have seen a doctor than women (2007). Yet, little is known about men's perception of health and the influences of masculinity on healthcare seeking behaviors by men (Liburd, Namageyo-Funa, & Jack, 2007). The concept of masculinity is culture bound and begins with socialization at home. For example, men have been socialized that expressing pain is a sign of weakness (Braithwaite, 2001). Liburid et al. (2007) repeated that influences of masculinity and the gender roles assigned by society directly impact the healthcare selection and management of Type 2 diabetes among men.

Men are more likely to engage in activities which put them at greater risk for injury or illness and men are far more likely to ignore symptoms, minor injuries, and minor illness until they reach an unhealthy acute state and must rely on medical intervention. These same male characteristics may be reflected in men testing their established plans of care resulting in non-adherence (Brooks, 2001).

Mental health is a major issue for men which does not get the attention that it should receive. Kemple (2009) warns that men's mental health needs are not being met. Kemple cites a study which concludes that 31% of men would be embarrassed about seeking help for a mental health problem compared with 26% of women.

Education

It has been well documented that men often learn and communicate differently than women do. Geist and King (2005) outline differences in learning styles and preferences among boys and girls and discuss how implementing teaching strategies that match these different learning styles directly impact the success of the student. Carter (2008) finds that certain teaching strategies which utilize tactile and kinesthetic learning are more effective and preferred by men. Brady and Sherrod (2003) point out that nursing programs need to focus not only on recruiting more male nursing students but also on doing a better job of retaining male students.

Research

Evidenced based research needs to be conducted to explore issues affecting men's health and men's health seeking behaviors. The role of masculinity, socially imposed expectations regarding male behavior, and the associated and/or resultant impact on men's physical and mental health states needs to be researched and addressed by academia and healthcare systems. Research is needed to explain how men define health, learn most effectively, and access healthcare. Additionally, gender specific educational strategies that effectively meet men's unique learning needs remain to be developed by patient and nurse educators

Recommendations

Supporting AAMN's published objective of advocating for continued research, education and dissemination of information about men's health issues, men in nursing, and nursing knowledge at the local and national levels as an objective, AAMN makes the following recommendation in an effort to move men's healthcare to the forefront of healthcare and public policy:

Development of a core curriculum at all levels of nursing education, i.e. baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral, to thread men's health throughout their respective curricula.

Development of graduate programs, such as nurse practitioners or clinical nurse specialty tracts, with an emphasis on men's health.

Development of a certification exam in men's health by nurse credentialing agencies to validate minimum competence and knowledge level for advance practice nurses who seek to specialize in men's health.

Continued support of the creation of an Office of Men's Health to mirror the Office of Women's Health as part of the Healthy People 2020 initiative.

Expanded research at the National Institute of Nursing Research which explores gender role influences in healthcare decision making.

Stronger collaborative relationships between nursing and other health-related disciplines, such as medicine, psychology, industrial health, public health, environmental health etc. to focus on men's health.

Development of a men's health specialty that responds to the following questions:

How do men define health?

What are the unique healthcare needs of men that impact morbidity and mortality?

What is the best way to integrate men's health into primary and specialty care services?

Why are there differences along gender lines in the selection and access of healthcare services?

What impact does masculinity have on physical, psychosocial, and mental health?

Are there specific patient teaching strategies that are more effective for men?

Summary

The void in literature pertaining to men's health, the glaring absence of health care policies addressing men's health, and the lack of healthcare options available for men underscores the need for a greater focus on men's health. This position statement from the American Assembly for Men in Nursing (AAMN) calls for nurse leaders to take the lead in promoting healthcare for men by advocating for and working towards a men's health core curriculum.

There is a gap in research pertaining to men's health and an absence of healthcare policies addressing men's health. Limited healthcare resources, inequitable options available to men in seeking healthcare, and the absence of policies addressing gender specific issues such as learning styles, masculinity, influences of testosterone on health, stereotypical male traits, such as risk taking behaviors, underscores the need for further studies and better understanding of men's health (Perle, Salzman, & Schaefer, 2006). Assuming an active role in supporting and developing a core curriculum for men's health provides the Assembly with the opportunity to fulfill the organization's stated objective of advocating for continued research, education and dissemination of information about men's health issues, men in nursing, and nursing knowledge at the local and national levels.

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