Windshield Survey

by

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Advanced Nursing Concepts

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The community health nurse does a community assessment to determine how a community influences the health of its residents. Community assessment is a technique that may be used to determine the health status, resources, or needs of a group of individuals and it’s very similar to the nursing process for individual client and family assessments (Hunt, 2013). All three dimensions of the community must be assessed: the people, the place, and the social systems. I observed two different neighborhoods in a small Southeastern Iowa town.

Neighborhood #1 is on the outskirts of this small rural town but still within town boundaries. I assessed the neighborhood by analyzing the characteristics of the residents in the neighborhood. As I drove past the houses this afternoon, I saw a white Caucasian woman, probably around 30 years of age, outside working on her lawn and flower bed. She was dressed in blue jeans, sweatshirt, and running shoes, and she waved at me as I drove by. It was obvious that she was keeping close watch over a young child in a hooded sweatshirt and pants who was riding a pink bicycle with training wheels in the driveway. Across the street, I saw an older Black couple walking their dog and they smiled and waved before coming over to talk with the woman and child. A few houses down, I saw two teenage boys playing basketball wearing Hawkeye sweatshirts and jeans. They were all dressed appropriately for this cooler day. I think this is a more middle class working neighborhood. The houses, mostly with garages, were ranch style or two story moderate to large in size, and looked well kept up. I saw no broken windows or doors missing. There were no vacant or condemned houses, and no ‘For Sale’ signs on neatly mowed lawns. Most vehicles parked in the driveways or open garages were fairly new or used SUV’s and some smaller cars. There was no littering on the ground that I could see nor were
there any stray dogs running loose. The neighborhood appeared to be a healthy place to live. I didn’t see any physical or visual evidence of communicable diseases, alcoholism, drug abuse, or mental illnesses. Even though I know that I can’t see what is going on inside these homes, I could still sense some pride in these people for taking care of themselves just from their active behaviors. I noted several neighborhood watch signs posted at random.

Accessible social systems in Neighborhood #1 are readily available. Social systems are defined as being economic, recreational, educational, religious, medical, and legal access (Hunt, 2013). There was a Casey’s gas and grocery store within 1 block and I saw numerous people in and out of this store as I drove by. Some of the store employees were outside smoking. There was a church, grade school, bank, and a health clinic within 2-3 blocks of this neighborhood. On one of the streets of this neighborhood is a cemetery and opposite it is a city park. The hospital is within 4 blocks. The law enforcement center was within 6 blocks. No industrial plants were nearby. The roads allow easy access to health institutions. The roads are marked with readable signs and are nicely kept. There was road construction in place with detour signs to the hospital.

When I drove through Neighborhood #2, on the East end of this town, it was totally different in appearance. Houses were older, smaller, and dilapidated with missing window’s that were boarded or covered with plastic or cracked windows uncovered. There were no garages seen except for some crumbling sheds that were packed with what looked like a lot of junk. I saw one house was condemned by the town council. There were old cars sitting in tall weeds of lawns without wheels on them. I saw white Caucasian people sitting on porches smoking and drinking beer this afternoon. The male adults weren’t wearing shirts and the obese woman was dressed in what looked like a torn stained shirt and pants and her hair was in tangles. Several kids between the ages of 2 and 6 were out playing in the street which was full of potholes. One small boy
yelled and threw rocks at my vehicle and the adults were just watching and laughing loudly but didn’t appear to be too concerned about safety issues. It was difficult to really cruise this neighborhood because between the kids and dogs running in the street and the potholes, it was hazardous driving. The kids were dirty, dressed in torn clothing, had tangled long hair, were barefoot, and not appropriately dressed warm enough for this cool day. One little girl had nasal drainage streaming down her face and ran towards my vehicle carrying what looked like cigarette butts in her hands that she had picked up off the street. Access to social systems was not readily apparent in this neighborhood which had a boundary of railroad tracks. I found a church and school within 8 blocks, a community health clinic within 6 blocks, a gas station, 2 bars, and a family restaurant within 4 blocks. There was no parks, bicycle or walking paths for healthy living. Bus route was available. The fire station and law enforcement offices were within 8 blocks. I did see a police vehicle cruising as I left the neighborhood. It was obvious to me that this neighborhood did not have much pride in themselves and their families. Despite the bus routes and accessible social systems by bus route I pointed out, the people I saw here were not mindful of what their kids were doing in the street. This makes me think that maybe they are less likely to seek medical attention unless they are seriously ill. Any health and wellness screening for the children probably is not followed up on. Even though these people may not have much money, they could still make sure that their clothing is clean and the hair brushed, and to teach their children not to play in the streets.

What I gleamed from this assignment is that it was very worthwhile. The community based health nurse must have insight into the community the people live and work and play in. In looking at these two very different neighborhoods, it was readily apparent that Neighborhood #2 will need more focused teaching on healthy behaviors and disease prevention.
Reference

Grading of this paper will be as follows:

This scholarly paper requires a cover page, 2-3 pages of discussion, and a reference page. Both neighborhoods in the community have to be observed and identified clearly in order to receive the maximum points. If no social systems are readily available you still need to describe the distance to the nearest health care center, clinic, the law enforcement agency, schools

- Introduction to the concept of community assessment 5 pts
- Discussion of people observed in the neighborhood #1, #2 25 pts
- Description of the neighborhood (place) #1, #2 25 pts
- Identification of social systems accessible #1, #2 25 pts
- Personal reflection; comparison of both neighborhoods 10 pts
- APA formatting, writing basics, and timeliness 10 pts

TOTAL 100