



Significance of Medical Social Work in Integrated Healthcare Service Delivery

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ABSTRACT

In order to provide comprehensive, ongoing, and patient-focused care, integrated healthcare services delivery entails the coordination and collaboration of various healthcare providers, disciplines, and systems. This seeks to optimize the use of healthcare resources while raising the standard of care and improving patient outcomes. The concept of medical social work and its importance are examined in this position paper. Providing supportive services through cooperative, methodical approaches including evaluation, counseling, mediation, and therapeutic intervention is an example of integrated healthcare service delivery. Crisis intervention, lobbying, educational materials, helpful advice, research, policy program development, and the supply of specialized clinic knowledge. Included were the essential elements of delivering integrated health care services. For substantive facts, the secondary data collection method has been applied.

Introduction

The meaning of health has evolved over time. The biological perspective states that early definitions of health placed a strong emphasis on the body's ability to operate, with health being seen as a state of regular function that may occasionally be disrupted by illness.

"A state characterized by anatomic, physiologic, and psychological integrity; ability to perform personally valued family, work, and community roles; ability to deal with physical, biological, psychological, and social stress" is an example of such a definition being used to describe health.

According to Stoke (1982), the 1948 World Health Organization (WHO) definition of health was distinct from previous definitions. According to WHO (1950), "physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity" was the criterion used to connect health and well-being. This description was criticized for being too vague, too wide, and not being quantitative, even though some people celebrated it as innovative. It was eventually dropped as an impractical ideal, and most health conversations now centre on how realistic the biological model is (Phprimer afc.ca 2024).

Variations in definitions of health. Again, in the 1980s, the WHO played a major role in the expansion of the health promotion movement. As a result, a new perspective on health was introduced, one that sees it as "a resource for living" as opposed to a static state but rather as dynamic resilience. The World Health Organization defined health as "the extent to which an individual or group is able to realize aspirations and satisfy needs and to change or cope with the environment" in 1984. In addition to physical capabilities, health is a positive concept that stresses social and personal resources. It is not the aim of life, but rather a resource for day-to-day existence. Thus, the definition of health was the ability to physical ability

It is a resource for daily life rather than the goal of living. As a result, health was defined as the capacity to preserve homeostasis and bounce back from adversity (WHO, 1984). The ability to manage stress, learn new skills, and uphold relationships are all components of mental, intellectual, emotional, and social health and serve as resources for resiliency and independent living. This creates a wealth of opportunities for health education, reinforcement, and learning.

In general, a person's living environment has a big impact on their health and quality of life. The discovery and use of health science, together with conscious lifestyle choices made by people and society at large, are increasingly recognized as contributing factors to the preservation and enhancement of health.

According to the World Health Organization (2024), the primary determinants of health include an individual's distinct characteristics and behaviour, the physical environment, and the social and

economic environment. More specifically, it has been determined that the following significant factors affect an individual's health: biology and genetics, culture, gender, health care services, healthy child development, personal health practices, coping skills, education and literacy, employment and working conditions, income and social status, physical environment, social environment, and social support networks.

Integrated healthcare delivery focuses on coordinating and collaborating among healthcare providers to ensure a comprehensive approach to patient care. It aims to combine curative and preventive systems with alternative therapies to provide holistic care. By working together, healthcare providers can offer continuous and patient-centered care to improve quality, patient outcomes, and resource utilization. In today's healthcare landscape, services are often seen as commodities rather than essential rights in developing and underdeveloped societies, leading to challenges in implementing universal health coverage. Medical social workers play a crucial role in integrated healthcare delivery by providing supportive and specialized services in health settings.

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION

Social work.

The goal of social work as a profession and academic discipline is to improve the individual and collective well-being of people by providing for their basic needs as individuals, families, groups, communities, and societies at large. In order to interact with systems and policies, carry out assessments, create interventions, and improve social functioning and responsibilities, social work practice incorporates ideas from a variety of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, health, political science, law, and economics. The enhancement of people's lives and the relief of bio psychosocial issues are social work's ultimate goals. The accomplishment of social justice and the empowerment of people or communities. {wikipedia}

Medical social work

Trained social workers in human relations to bring about adjustments between the patient and his environment. It is concerned with both the curing and caring aspects of illness. The application of social work theory and methods for treating and preventing psychological dysfunctions, disabilities, and emotional, mental, and behavioral disorders in a professional manner is necessary. (Tushar Shukla, 2019:543)

Integrated Health Care

The American Psychosocial Association (2004) frequently refers to integrated health care as inter-professional healthcare. The inter-professional healthcare team is made up of a diverse range of individuals, including medical professionals, and is distinguished by its high level of collaboration and communication among health professionals. What sets integrated health care apart is the sharing of information about patient care among team members and the creation of a comprehensive treatment plan that addresses the patient's biological, psychological, and social needs. g. Physicians, nurses, psychologists, and other medical specialists) based on the patients' requirements.

Key components of Integrated Healthcare Services delivery involve the following approaches:

1. **Interdisciplinary collaboration:** Integrated healthcare reduces barriers between mental health professionals, physicians, nurses, specialists, and alternative medical therapists, among other healthcare disciplines. Patients receive holistic therapy that takes into account both physical and emotional health issues thanks to seamless collaboration.
2. **Care coordination:** Organizing and managing patient care across various healthcare settings and providers is crucial in integrated healthcare. This ensures a smooth transition of information and services as patients move through different stages of their healthcare journey.
3. **Making the most of health information technology:** To promote communication and information exchange among healthcare professionals, integrated health services significantly rely on health information technology. Digital tools, such as electronic health records (EHRs), are essential in guaranteeing that pertinent patient data is readily available.
4. **Patients' empowerment and involvement in all aspects:** Key elements of integrated healthcare include giving patients active access to their health information, involving them in decision-making, and promoting self-management practices. Patients who feel empowered and involved are more likely to follow their treatment regimens and have improved health results.
5. **Public health and preventive healthcare:** Integrated healthcare places a strong emphasis on implementing care and managing the health of populations. By focusing on preventive measures and addressing underlying health determinants, healthcare providers can reduce the incidence of curing diseases and improve overall community health.
6. **The utilization of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM),** often known as alternative medical therapies, comprises a wide array of therapeutic modalities that are not part of the

mainstream medical field. This therapist placed a high priority on holistic well-being by keeping an eye on how the mind, body, and spirit are interconnected. Therapies like acupuncture, reflexology, herbal therapy, yoga, breathing exercises, chiropractic adjustments, meditation, and neuropathy are all included in this. While using science. CAM therapies are gaining popularity despite conflicting scientific data, and some have demonstrated promise in treating particular conditions. What makes them popular is their focus on preventive, individualised care, and enabling people to actively participate in their health journeys (J. Faisal, 2023: 14–15).

The scope of social work practice in the health sector

Social work is a vast field with links to numerous other academic specialties. Social work organizations offer the following definitions: society work is a practice- and academic-based field that promotes individual liberty and empowerment as well as society development and cohesiveness. The core principles of social work include respect for variety, human rights, social justice, and group accountability. Social work uses theories from the social sciences, humanities, and indigenous knowledge to engage people and structures in order to address life's issues and enhance well-being (IFSW, 2016).

The goal of the profession of social work is to help people—individuals, families, groups, and communities—improve their general well-being. It aims to provide people the tools they need to improve their abilities, make the most of their resources, and deal with both personal and societal issues including domestic abuse, unemployment, and poverty. (CASW, 2011)

Using social work concepts and practices, social workers offer a range of services targeted at assisting individuals, families, and communities. This include helping people get the resources they need, including treatment and counselling, enhancing social and health services in local areas, and taking part in the legislative process. In addition to having a solid grasp of social, economic, and cultural structures and how they function within them, social workers also need to have a thorough understanding of human behaviour and development (NASW 2017).

Better life outcomes are achieved by individuals and families with the help of social workers. This might include helping individuals who wish to live freely or defending the weak against abuse or violence. Social workers help, advocate for the needs of their clients, and direct them to any services they may require. Multidisciplinary teams often involve social workers, health professionals, and educators working together (BASW 2024).

MEDICAL SOCIAL WORK

The study of the social aspects of medicine is the focus of the sub discipline of medical social work. Medical social workers often work in long-term care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, community health agencies, hospitals, and outpatient clinics. In need of psychosocial support, they assist patients and their families.

Medical social work is a sub discipline that focuses on the social aspects of medicine. Medical social workers frequently work in hospitals, outpatient clinics, community health organizations, skilled nursing institutions, and long-term care facilities. They support patients who require psychosocial support as well as their relatives. Medical social workers assess patients' and their families' psychosocial functioning before intervening if needed. Medical social workers strive to "restore balance in an individual's personal, family, and social life" in order to support patients in preserving or regaining their health as well as enhancing their capacity for adaptation and reintegration into society.

Interventions could be arranging for patients and their families to receive preventive care or other essential community resources and support; offering psychotherapy, multifarious guidance and counselling or assisting a patient in building and maintaining a network of social supports.

They also fully engage in policy research for health programs and provide education to staff and patients. Working with other medical and para medical professional to render professional supportive services (Wikipedia, 2024).

Social workers use professional knowledge, and techniques, to guarantee thorough assessment data and an all-encompassing examination of the patient's circumstances. The scope of social work assessment extends from a focused and concise analysis of particular needs to a thorough psychosocial and risk assessment that evaluates all social and psychological needs, stressors, and strengths. The needs-based and evidence-based intervention that addresses social and emotional issues affecting the health, well-being, adjustment, and recovery of the patient and their family/career is supported by these assessments.

A vital component of multidisciplinary hospital teams are social workers. Physicians, nurses, and other health care providers. Healthcare teams can benefit from social workers' education regarding the psychological and social ramifications of a patient's condition. The conditions of the patients may be

considerably impacted by this information. This data has the potential to greatly impact the patient's treatment plan, making it highly responsive to their needs.

THE SCOPE OF PRACTICE OF MEDICAL SOCIAL WORK

1. Assessment

Assessment is the process of gathering, examining, and documenting data about individuals, their situations, and the larger context of their lives in order to have a better understanding, determine whether more intervention is required, and if so, suggest what kind(s) of action(s) to take. It can take the form of an ongoing process, an event that happens at a specific moment in time, a combination of the two, or it can switch between the two as conditions alter. (H. John. 2018:26).

The following are some of the functions of an assessment and social worker.

Thorough psychological evaluation of patients, taking into account their relationships, families, and jobs. Risk assessment, comprehensive intervention, and treatment for domestic violence, intimate relationship crisis, geriatric abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation, and child's rights abuse and violation together with their needs. Assessment of functioning, capacity, and development, along with participation and support needs, housing, and lodging. Using screening instruments based on evidence for a variety of problems.

2. Intervention in a crisis.

Crisis intervention is a brief management technique designed to reduce the likelihood of long-term damage to an individual going through a crisis. A crisis is defined as an extraordinary event.

Reber, A. S et al. (2010:180) describe a kind of psychotherapy that focuses on urgent, serious circumstances. In order to systematically assist vulnerable individuals in crisis in navigating and communicating their needs and wishes within the hospital system, medical social workers engage in crisis intervention. Acute care given to emergency rooms as a result of traumas that cause major crises, sudden traumatic injury, or death (including natural diseases).

3. Resources mobilization, education, and practical assistance

Resources, assistance, and financial support in obtaining relevant data. Educating patients, families, and caregivers on the roles and responsibilities of healthcare team members in order to help them communicate with them, comprehend medical information, and make advance care plans.

4. Research and Design of Policy Programs:

In a hospital, a professional medical social worker can also play the following role: directing and assisting in the organizational-level implementation of patient-centered "models of care", Creating policies, designing programs, and evaluating them. Researching and publishing in journals that are subject to peer review.

5. The provision of specialized clinical expertise:

In treating a range of psychosocial concerns, including chronic health disorders, trauma, depression, family intervention, sexual abuse, elder abuse, depression, mourning, sorrow, loss support, and mistreatment of children or domestic animals. Support for coping strategies and psychological results, assistance with socio-legal matters, advanced care planning, family therapy, culturally sensitive therapies, and coordination with other medical specialists are all included in this. (AASW 2019)

Conclusion:

By offering professional psychosocial support to clients through a collaborative system between medical social workers and other healthcare service providers for effective integrated healthcare service delivery in developing and underdeveloped societies, medical social work plays a significant role in the effectiveness of comprehensive and integrated healthcare service delivery in the health system. Because of their significant influence as providers of supportive services through assessment, counseling, advocacy, policy, program design, and research, among other things, medical social workers are greatly needed.

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