

Building the Foundation: Blueprint for a Healthcare and Homelessness Elective in Medical School Clinical Education

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Introduction & Objectives

Overview

An immersive clinical elective for MS4 students has been designed in partnership with Heartland Alliance Health (HAH), the single largest provider of healthcare to Chicago's homeless population.

Goals

- Equip medical students with the knowledge to provide comprehensive care for people experiencing homelessness.
- Measure students' attitudes and practices regarding the provision of care for individuals experiencing homelessness both before and after the course.
- Dismantle biases and address educational gaps in healthcare trainees.
- Promote understanding of housing models and support networks while gaining experience with trauma-informed care as a framework to care.

Methods & Design

Clinical Design

- Students rotate through federally-qualified health centers and permanent supportive housing sites.
- Students join an interdisciplinary team of healthcare and social work professionals.

Sample Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1: Uptown	Primary Care	Benefits/Housing	Kovler Center	Pathways Home	Supportive Treatment and Recovery (STAR)
Week 2: James West	STAR	Primary Care	STAR	Hepatitis C	Primary Care
Week 3: Englewood	Primary Care	HIV Early Intervention Program	STAR	Primary Care	Primary Care
Week 4: Uptown	Transgender Clinic	Primary Care	STAR	HIV Early Intervention Program	Peer Presentation

Curriculum Design

- Clinical experiences supplemented with online modules and readings
- Cover topics in trauma-informed care, housing models, addiction and recovery, hepatitis C treatment, LGBTQIA+ care, etc.

Student Work

- Final project that promotes healthcare advocacy. Students create a media presentation investigating a specific barrier to care or highlighting a patient story for the medical community.
- Self-reflection prompts as students progress through the elective.
 - Sample: Describe a patient visit that impacted you. Identify the patient's social determinants of health and describe their impact on patient care.

Addressing the COVID Pandemic

COVID-19's Impact

- Due to the pandemic, the pilot elective in partnership with HAH was delayed.
- Chicago's homeless population became more vulnerable with decreased services.

Course Adjustment

- The course was adapted into a COVID screening elective, allowing MS4 students to join a team of providers testing at shelters with the Chicago Homelessness and Health Response Group for Equity (CHHRGE).

Thus Far

- Two MS4 students completed the COVID screening elective with several more anticipated this winter.

References

1. Buck, David S., et al. "Design and validation of the health professionals' attitudes toward the homeless inventory (HPATHI)." BMC medical education 5.1 (2005):

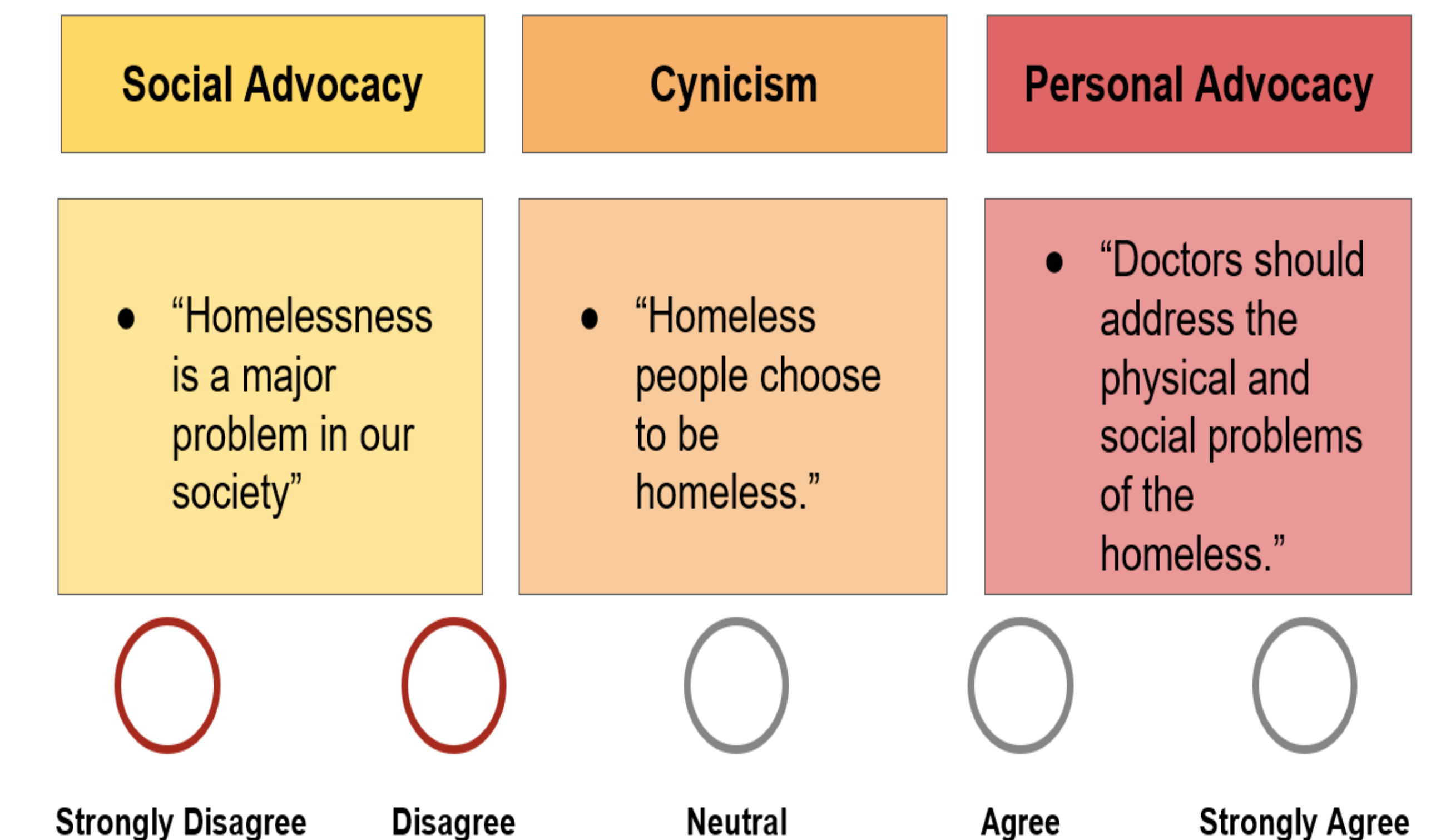
Future Analysis

Survey Tool: Health Professionals' Attitudes Toward the Homeless Inventory (HPATHI) survey tool ¹.

- A validated tool that assesses the learner's attitudes and practices around homelessness across 3 domains.

Purpose

- Measure impact of the course on these attitudes and practices to strengthen the course and to share those findings with the greater medical education community.



Future Steps

Student Investment

- Participants become stewards of knowledge and gain a set of skills that will improve clinical practice and empower them to be better advocates for equity and social justice.

Continued Improvement

- We have had the opportunity to address this in a COVID setting and have built virtual content that will allow us to expand the reach of this course.
- As medical education evolves, we will continue to adjust the course to the dynamic environment of healthcare to ensure overarching goals are met moving forward.