Class Activities for **Chapter 7: Health Care and Health Challenges**

**Class activity #1**

Break the class up into 3-4 groups. Hand out the following vignettes to each group and ask them to discuss what they would do if they were the social workers involved in each case. Discuss as a large group after the individual groups have fully discussed their decisions.

Kelly is a hospital social worker who has been approached by a staff physician regarding a patient named Beverly. The doctor wishes for Kelly to convince Beverly that surgery is the right option for her because, at this point, Beverly has refused to consent. Upon meeting with her, Kelly learns Beverly has a terminal cancer diagnosis and the surgery in question would perhaps extend her life 3-6 months. Beverly appears of sound mind and does not wish to go through with the surgery, saying she has had enough procedures and wants to die at home in a hospice setting surrounded by her family. When Kelly shares this information with the doctor, he informs her that he knows what’s best for his patient and tells Kelly once again to convince Beverly of the need for this surgery. The doctor says it will likely lengthen Beverly’s life by several months and there is a chance her death could be put off for 2-3 years if things go well. Kelly runs into Beverly’s children in the hallway, and they ask her if there’s anything she can do to convince their mother to go through with the surgery. What should Kelly do?

Gaganjit is a social worker at a long-term care facility. He has grown to have a close relationship with a particular resident, Genevieve (age 89), who is on dialysis and takes multiple pain medications. Genevieve has been open with Gaganjit about her depression; her children and grandchildren have not visited in over a year, and her husband passed away 18 months ago at the same facility. Genevieve confides in Gaganjit that she knows how much medication she would need to put aside in order to overdose, and can hide the medicine and collect it. While she denies that she has been doing so thus far, she also tells Gaganjit, “I just want you to know I really appreciate all you’ve done for me the last several months, and I wanted to be sure I got a chance to tell you that while I still can.” Gaganjit knows if he reports Genevieve’s comments to the medical staff, she may be put on a psychiatric watch and may no longer get the painkilling medication she needs to be comfortable. If he doesn’t tell anyone and Genevieve overdoses on pain medication, he will probably be the only person who knows what happened, since her death will not likely surprise the medical staff given her advanced age. What should Gaganjit do?

Christy is a hospital social worker in a major metropolitan teaching hospital. She is working with Ida, a patient who has shared that she is a lesbian. Christy has met Ida’s partner, Valerie, who has visited with her frequently during open visiting hours. However, the hospital is in a state that does not recognize same-sex marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships. Therefore, the hospital is under no legal obligation to allow Valerie to visit with Ida during family-only visiting hours.

Ida unexpectedly takes a turn for the worse and knows death is a possibility within the next few days, and she understandably wants Valerie by her side during the tough time ahead. However, the doctors and administrators are adamant that only family are allowed at patient bedsides outside of open visiting hours. Christy has the opportunity to meet Ida’s older sister Bette, who believes Ida has the right to be with Valerie if she chooses to do so, and has even considered disguising Valerie and bringing her in, claiming she is Ida’s (nonexistent) younger sister. Ida says she would rather go home and be with Valerie than face possible death without her lifelong partner by her side. Christy knows if Ida leaves, she is likely to die at home within 24 hours, but if she remains at the hospital, she has a chance to recover. What should Christy do?

**Class activity #2**

Three indicators of the success and quality of a country’s health care system are the cost of care, infant mortality, and life expectancy. The United States health care system is consistently the most expensive in the world, but does it get commensurate results?

Break the class into either two or four groups. In the case of two groups, assign one group infant mortality and one group life expectancy. In the case of four groups, assign two groups to each statistic. Then give the groups a set of ten index cards with the names of countries on them and ask them to organize the countries in order from best to worst in their particular statistic. The United States should be in each group of ten. Here are groups that can be used (with rankings based on data from the 2014 CIA World Factbook). You may tell the students that all of the countries listed are in the top 100 countries in the world (out of over 200) for the relevant statistic.

Life expectancy: Japan (3rd-longest), Switzerland (8th), Australia (10th), Canada (14th), Norway (17th), Israel (19th), United Kingdom (29th), Greece (30th), South Korea (39th), United States (42nd), Chile (52nd), Algeria (80th)

Infant mortality: Japan (2nd-lowest), Sweden (6th), Italy (12th), Belarus (19th), South Korea (25th), United Kingdom (36th), Cuba (42nd), Canada (43rd), Bosnia & Herzegovina (52nd), United States (56th)

Discuss why the United States is ranked so much lower than countries we’d perhaps expect to at least be even with, if not better than. How many of these countries have national health care systems, and what kinds do they have? Why do we spend so much more on health care without getting comparable results? Encourage them to investigate outside of class (or on laptops and cell phones in class if you wish).

You can use the CIA World Factbook online if you’d like to choose different countries, or update your statistics when more recent data than 2014 is available.

**Class activity #3**

At the end of the class meeting for the final class before you begin covering Chapter 7, give each student ten copies of the following survey and have them get ten different people to fill them out. Preferably, students should survey people outside of their own immediate peer group or family, and to try to survey a diverse group. Make sure you let them know that the Affordable Care Act and Obamacare refer to the same legislation, but that they should not inform their survey respondents about that.

Have them bring the completed responses to class the next time you meet. Then discuss as a large group. You may also take the results and compile them for future discussion if you prefer.

Discussion questions

1. What did they notice about the survey results?

2. The individual questions refer to elements of the Affordable Care Act. Were there many people who were in favor of the individual elements of the Affordable Care Act but stated they were against the act as a whole?

3. The Affordable Care Act is often called Obamacare. Were there people who claimed to be in favor of one but not the other? Why do you think that is?

Health Care Survey

1. Are you in favor of allowing children to stay on their parents’ health insurance until age 26, if the family wishes to do so?

Yes No

2. Should insurance companies be allowed to choose not to offer coverage to people with preexisting conditions, or to charge them more for coverage?

Yes No

3. Should employers with 50 or more employees be required to provide health insurance benefits to their employees?

Yes No

4. Should women be able to get contraception coverage through their employer’s health insurance plan?

Yes No

5. When insured people experience serious illness or injury, should insurance companies be able to cancel their policies based on minor errors they made in their initial applications?

Yes No

6. What is your opinion of Obamacare?

Strongly favor Somewhat favor Neutral Somewhat oppose Strongly oppose

Not sure Comments: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your opinion of the Affordable Care Act?

Strongly favor Somewhat favor Neutral Somewhat oppose Strongly oppose

Not sure Comments: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_