Questions for Discussion

_Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child_, by Elva Treviño Hart

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1. Vulnerable populations are at tremendous risk for health disparities. Vulnerability can be defined as a subgroup of the population that is more likely to develop health problems as a result of exposure to risk or to have worse outcomes from these health problems than the rest of the population. What are some of the risks associated with being migrant farm workers that contribute to vulnerability? As a health care provider, how would you design your services to best meet the vulnerabilities listed?

2. In the book, the author emphasized that her parents were consistently adamant that the family be back in Texas so that the children could attend school. They displayed a value for education. Why do you think that they valued education for their children even though they were not educated? How is education and educational preparation tied to other factors that decrease vulnerability?

3. Migrant farm workers are generally impoverished and belong to minority groups. Many may not speak English. Discuss what you have heard by business owners, teachers, clergy, politicians, and health care providers say about this population. Can you identify misinformation or lack of information on their part? How will what you have learned by reading this book inform your practice?

4. In the book, there are some instances where alternative healing practices were used by migrant farm workers. Did any of the techniques surprise you? According to the author, the healing practices mentioned seemed to resolve the health issue. Why do you think they worked? In your practice would it be of interest to you if your patients tried alternative healing practices before coming to you? Why is it important to know if they have tried some of these practices? What would be some of the practices you would put into your practice to find out if your patients used any of these methods without offending them?

5. Discuss how this book is a memoir of a girl raised within a migrant farm worker family. It is her story. Is it important to be able to know the story of our patients? What can knowing our patients’ story inform our care for them? What are some of the strategies used by health care providers to hear and understand patients’ stories by health care providers?