Leveraging Social Determinants of Health Screening to Improve Health Disparities in Primary Care Settings

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Introduction

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks (RWJF, 2017).

Methods

Pre-intervention:  • Patient self-reporting of SDOH concerns  • Intervention:  • DNP student and clinic staff administered SDOH screening tool.  • Adapted PRAPARE Sourcing tool (NACHC, 2019) was integrated into the daily schedule with other forms.  • Setting/Duration: Semi rural specialty primary care clinic in Southern Maryland; data collection X 14 weeks.

Population:  • Mixed population: Medicaid, Medicare, Private pay for service (> 18 years of age), and self referral.

Tactics:  • Staff training on importance of collecting data on the social determinants of health and how it aligns with activities that your organization is already doing.  • Flyer about SDOH screening to increase patients

Results

Housing Status & Employment Status

Social Integration & Stress Levels

Health Insurance & Transportation

Relationship Between Employment & Insurance: Race and Education

Short Term Goals:  • Screen 100% of patients for SDOH during in-office clinic visits.  • Compile a list of resources available in the community for referrals to appropriate community resources.

Long-term Goals:  • 100% of patients at the practice will receive appropriate referrals for social needs.

Discussion

Key Points:

• The project purpose was accomplished according to the original project timeline.
• The standardized SDOH PRAPARE screening tool was used successfully for this project.
• There is more evidence-based research to support SDOH screening in clinical care to positively affect population health and reduce health inequities (Andermann, 2018).
• SDOH screening is an emerging area of clinical practice; still requires a great deal more research and ongoing continuing education for implementation in practice (Andermann, 2018).

Barriers:

• Staff were challenged at times to fit the screening into their workflow on busy days.
• Self-reported data and the use of a convenience sample recruited from a single clinic in a small urban area.

Limitations:

• This study has limitations due to self-reported data and the use of a convenience sample recruited from a single clinic in a small urban area. Women were more likely to participate. A nationally representative sample would be helpful in future studies.

• Social determinants have a major impact on health outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable populations. Factors such as a patient’s education, income level, and environment must be considered when providing treatment and care.
• Recent estimates attribute 10 to 20 percent of health outcomes to medical care, 30 percent to genetic, 40 to 50 percent to behavior, and 20 to 30 percent to the social and physical environment/CSI, 2014.

Conclusions

Implications

The findings from this study support the notion that primary care clinics are an appropriate setting for assessing social and behavioral determinants of health. Providers can identify the under lying needs and factors affecting the health of their patients through social determinants of health screenings. Through routine screening for social determinants of health precision medicine will develop treatment plans that consider not only a person’s genetic make up but also their social environment.

It will be necessary to conduct further studies to examine the impact of administering questionnaires on the clinic workflow and integration into the electronic health record.

Future Implications:

Recommendations to measure long term goals and impacts of SDOH on health outcomes on specific chronic illnesses such as diabetes.

This project should be adopted and adapted to other primary care clinics to further decrease health disparities and increase population health across the U.S. and beyond.

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References:


https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/index.htm