

Thinking Outside the Box: Addressing Social Determinants of Health in Pediatric Medicine

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SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

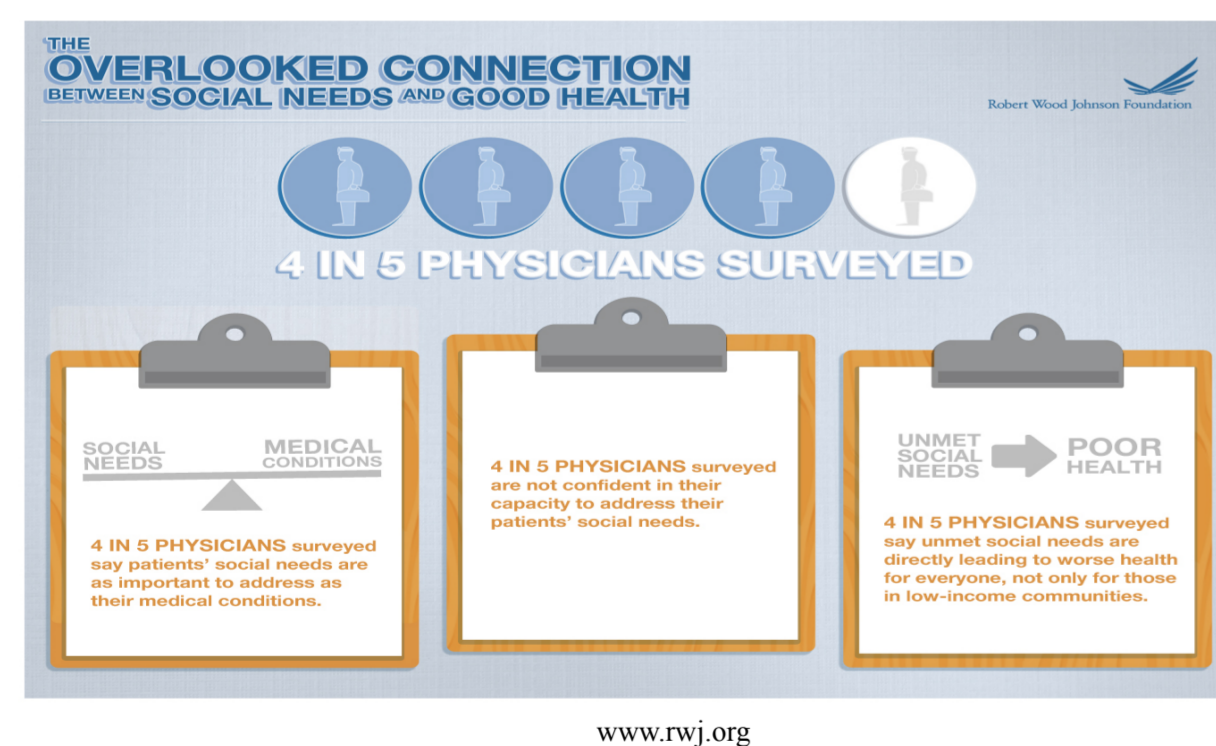


Child health in the United States has become more dependent on social factors.

Research has shown that the social determinants of health (SDOH) are the main factors that will determine whether a child will be healthy or ill.



Despite evidence supporting the role of social forces in determining good or ill health, most physicians finish their training ill-prepared to address these issues.



Traditionally, a residency curriculum does not specifically address the social determinants of health or how to advocate for families' cultural, social, or economic needs.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this project was to develop a well-defined and comprehensive Social Determinants of Health curriculum for use in pediatric resident training programs on how to take action to address the broader social determinants of health.

METHODS

LITERATURE REVIEW
EVALUATION OF CURRICULUM
KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Literature Review

A literature review search was conducted using PubMed and Google Scholar for potentially relevant literature on the existence of social determinants of health curricula in pediatric resident training programs.

Evaluation of Curriculum

I evaluated two well-known pediatric training curriculums for evidence of specific training on the social determinants of health.

Key Informant Interviews

Four informative interviews were conducted in person with 2 experts in the fields of public health and pediatrics.

RESULTS

Literature Review

The review of the literature identified several curriculums that addressed some aspects of SDOH, but no comprehensive curriculum specifically developed to train pediatric residents about the social determinants of health.

Evaluation of Curriculum

The evaluation of these two programs provided insight to what is currently being done to prepare resident pediatricians on addressing the SDOH as well as the current gaps in curriculum.

Key Informant Interviews

The experts responded to three questions:

Why teach social determinants of health to resident pediatricians?

Pediatricians are serving a population that cannot speak for themselves, so by default they will be advocates for their patients whether they know it or not.

How does training affect the way pediatricians practice?

- Thinking outside the box.
- Looking at the whole picture.
- Obtains knowledge of the root causes of ill health and the skills necessary to intervene on behalf of their patients.

How should SDOH curricula be incorporated in to a pediatric residency program?

- Early, effectively, patiently, and with exquisite care.
- Longitudinally offering ongoing exposure.
- Provide opportunities to observe others and practice the behaviors they observed.
- Provide residents with community exposure to raise awareness to what people in the community face day to day and for residents to learn from the community they serve.

SDOH CURRICULUM

Given the gap in pediatric training that involves explicit attention to the SDOH, a comprehensive curriculum is proposed.

This curriculum consists of 4 core concepts within the SDOH discourse: **Social Justice, Health Equity, Cultural Humility** and **Healthy Communities**. These lessons provide residents with the opportunity to learn about the root causes of health inequities and how to develop strategies to reduce those inequities.

In addition it will focus on four competency areas:

Pediatrician as Advocate - Because pediatricians are serving a population that cannot speak for themselves they must step into the role of advocate and be able to identify needs and facilitate access to resources for patients, families and communities.

Pediatrician as Health Educator - It is crucial that pediatricians become effective in health promotion and disease prevention in order to educate families and to support healthy communities.

Pediatrician as Collaborator – With the focus being on the health of the child and his/her family, the pediatrician must be able to collaborate with key individuals, organizations and systems whose work impacts the wellbeing of the child.

Pediatrician as Communicator – It is essential that pediatricians are able to effectively communicate with the community they serve despite social, economic, cultural and language barriers.

Table 1. SDOH Curriculum Outline

Overall Goal: By the time pediatric residents have completed this curriculum they will have comprehensive knowledge of core concepts regarding the social determinants of health that affect their patients as well as the skills necessary to intervene on their behalf.

Learning Objectives: Pediatricians will:

- 1) Be aware of the social determinants that affect the health of patients, families and communities;
- 2) Understand the manner through which social determinants shape the health chances of communities;
- 3) Understand the political and economic dynamics that reproduce health damaging environments;
- 4) Be familiar with the broad range of strategies which may be used to address the social determinants of health.

Module	Topic	Competencies as Introduced	Activities
Social Justice	What is Social Justice? (2hr)	Pediatrician as Advocate	Video
	Health Inequality (2hr)		Handout
	Introduction to Health Disparities and Health Inequities (2hr)		Activities
Health Equity	What Influences Health? (2hr)	Pediatrician as Collaborator	Case-based learning
	Guest Speaker		Site Visit
	Reflection		Reflection
Cultural Humility	What is Health Equity? (2hr)	Pediatrician as Communicator	Video
	Introduction to SDOH (2hr)		Handout
	Root Causes of Health Disparities (2hr)		Activities
Healthy Communities	Taking Action on the SDOH (2hr)	Pediatrician as Educator	Case-based learning
	Guest Speaker		Site Visit
	Reflection		Reflection
Healthy Communities	What is Cultural Humility? (2hr)	Pediatrician as Educator	Video
	Practicing Cultural Humility (2hr)		Handout
	Self Awareness (1hr)		Activities
Healthy Communities	Self Reflection (2hr)	Pediatrician as Educator	Case-based learning
	Guest Speaker		Site Visit
	Reflection		Reflection
Healthy Communities	What is Healthy Communities? (1hr)	Pediatrician as Educator	Video
	Healthy Communities vs. Community Health (2hr)		Handout
	Becoming a Community Responsive Physician (2hr)		Activities
Healthy Communities	Community Development for Health (2hr)	Pediatrician as Educator	Case-based learning
	Guest Speaker		Site Visit
	Reflection		Reflection

CONCLUSION

Pediatric residency programs do not provide adequate training on the SDOH despite the mounting evidence of pediatricians' uneasiness or inability to confront the health inequities and disparities experienced by the community they serve.

To address the gap in pediatric training that entails specific attention to the SDOH, a well-defined and comprehensive Social Determinants of Health curriculum for use in pediatric resident training programs on how to take action to address the broader social determinants of health is proposed.

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References

Complete list of references available by email request donnar@mail.sfsu.edu