

Capsule Commentary for Rogers et al., Patients' Attitudes and Perceptions Regarding Social Needs Screening and Navigation: Multi-Site Survey in a Large Integrated Health System



Antoinette Schoenthaler, EdD FACH

Department of Population Health, 180 Madison Ave, New York, NY, USA.

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The study by Rogers et al.¹ aims to address a gap in the evidence base regarding patients' attitudes toward and receptivity of health system social needs programs. Given the dearth of research in this area, the authors developed a survey to assess patients' perceptions of and experiences with social needs; attitudes toward health systems' role in screening, referral, and use of social need data to improve patient care; and level of financial investment health systems should commit to address social needs.

While the multi-site survey achieved high response rates (79%), only 17% of respondents reported experiencing ≥ 1 social need in the past year. This finding could be an artifact of the sampling strategy. The study was limited to insured patients receiving care in an integrated health system who were able to read and speak in English or Spanish, and presented for a clinic appointment when the survey was being conducted.

Nonetheless, the authors note several key findings when examining the data by demographic characteristics. Males were less likely to believe that health systems should screen for, address, and use social needs data to improve care. Older patients and those who identify as Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Black were less likely to believe that social needs are associated with health. Patients of Asian/Pacific Islander descent were less likely to agree that health systems should screen for or address social needs. Patients with some college education were less likely to endorse health systems' use of social needs data or allocate part of its budget to address social needs.

These findings have important implications for developing patient-centered strategies to discuss social needs in health

systems.^{2, 3} This is especially critical for vulnerable populations who are more likely to experience complex social, cultural, linguistic, and psychosocial barriers to accepting assistance for services.⁴ For these reasons, more research is needed to elucidate the myriad of factors that influence patients' perceptions of health system social needs programs.⁵ Without such an understanding, health systems risk becoming disconnected from the everyday realities of their patients' lives—and may fail to serve the populations these programs were designed to reach.

Corresponding Author: Antoinette Schoenthaler, EdD FACH; Department of Population Health, 180 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016, USA (e-mail: Antoinette.Schoenthaler@nyulangone.org).

Compliance with Ethical Standards:

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that she does not have a conflict of interest.

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