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### **Social Determinants of Health Screening in a Suburban Primary Care Setting**

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#### **Abstract**

Health care providers in a large private primary care practice reported an inability to identify and refer patients who were experiencing social determinants of health (SDOH) needs.

Implementation of SDOH screening using the Health Leads questionnaire has been shown to decrease hospital utilization and improve health outcomes.

A quality improvement project was implemented to help staff screen and refer patients to social care providers. The Health Leads questionnaire was integrated into the electronic record to promote sustainability. Training was provided to medical assistants who conducted SDOH screens prior to in-office or telehealth visit with the medical provider. Eligible patients included those with Medicare insurance (over 65 years of age or disabled).

During implementation, 96.25% of patients (n=231) agreed to screening. Of these, 13.42% (n=31) screened positive for at least one SDOH need, and 48.39% (n=15) reported multiple social needs. All patients screening positive (100%) were provided resources. Race was significantly associated with positive reports of SDOH. Of the four racial groups, 36.36% (n=4) of all unidentified patients had the highest proportion of need followed by 16.25% (n=13) whites, 12.77% (n=12) African Americans, and 4.35% (n=2) of Asians screened;  $X^2$  (df=1, N=231)=8.828, p=0.032. Patients were more likely to report SDOH needs during in-person visits (17.22%) compared to telehealth visits (6.25%);  $X^2$  (df=1, N=231)=5.4148, p=0.020.

Evaluation shows that patients were willing to be screened for SDOH and that point-of-care screening for SDOH during a health care provider visit is feasible and can increase the rate in which SDOH needs are identified and addressed in the community. Implementation of SDOH screening by trusted providers in convenient locations where patients frequently visit will help to decrease stigma, improve access to services, and improve health outcomes.

