

Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk

Manuscript 1553

Social Determinants of Health - Editors' Introduction

Michelle Lopez

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.tmc.edu/childrenatrisk>

The [Journal of Applied Research on Children](#) is brought to you for free and open access by CHILDREN AT RISK at DigitalCommons@The Texas Medical Center. It has a "cc by-nc-nd" Creative Commons license" (Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives) For more information, please contact digitalcommons@exch.library.tmc.edu



Social Determinants of Health - Editors' Introduction

Michelle A Lopez, MD, MPH and Chris Greeley, MD, MS
Department of Pediatrics, Baylor College of Medicine

Helping children achieve a healthier quality of life requires a critical examination of the determinants of health, including genetics, behavior, environmental and physical influences, medical care, and social factors.¹ In particular, social factors or social determinants of health have increasingly been recognized as one of the largest contributors to health inequities. The conditions in the environments where children are born, live, learn, play, and age are social determinants of health, and these are largely shaped by socioeconomics and government policies.² As such, work to improve health outcomes must largely occur at the societal level.

To close the gap in disparate health outcomes, Michael Marmot has encouraged a shift from focusing on individual level behaviors to social determinants of health.³ For example, pediatric healthcare providers might focus on important prevention counseling such as smoking cessation in parents of children with respiratory conditions such as asthma. Marmot argues that clinicians should not forget the complex psychosocial factors that drive people to behaviors such as smoking.³ He suggests that clinicians focus on addressing social determinants of health if they want to have a meaningful impact on patient health outcomes. To emphasize the larger forces shaping health outcomes beyond a patient's control, Marmot shares David Gordon and the Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research's top tips for health:^{3,4}

1. Don't be poor. If you can, stop. If you can't, try not to be poor for long.
2. Don't live in a deprived area. If you do move.
3. Don't be disabled or have a disabled child.
4. Don't work in a stressful, low-paid manual job.
5. Don't live in damp, low-quality housing or be homeless.
6. Be able to afford to pay for social activities and annual holidays.
7. Don't be a lone parent.
8. Claim all benefits to which you are entitled.
9. Be able to afford to own a car.
10. Use education to improve your socio-economic position.

While this list is intentionally provocative, it successfully emphasizes the challenges and barriers to health faced by many children and families. A possible solution to mitigate some of these challenges can be found in government policies. For example, anti-poverty programs like refundable tax credits and pandemic expansions to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and school lunch programs during the COVID-19 pandemic were estimated to decrease poverty in millions of children in 2021 and the expiration of these programs led to a doubling in the poverty rate in children in 2022.⁵

This issue in the *Journal of Applied Research in Children* will focus on the role of socioeconomic and health policies to address social determinants of health. We will have two installments addressing the 10 top tips for health quoted by Michael Marmot.

Table of Contents – First Installment

Don't be poor. If you can, stop. If you can't, try not to be poor for long.

Addressing Economic Drivers of Health in the Clinic: The Role and Potential of Medical-Financial Partnerships

Geoffrey Gusoff, M.D., M.B.A., M.S., Adam Schickedanz, M.D., Ph.D.

Don't be disabled or have a disabled child.

Cross-Sectional Study: Factors Associated with having a Medicaid Waiver at Transfer to Adult Care for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

Ellen Fremion, M.D., Ananth Panchamukhi, B.S., B.A., Kristen A. Staggers, M.S., Taylor Mann, MS, PA-C, Juliana Abel, MS, PA-C, Ambrielle Davis, A.P.R.N, Tiffany Castenell, L.M.S.W., Samuel Garcia, L.M.S.W.

Don't live in damp, low-quality housing or be homeless.

The Housing Gap: Understanding the Role of Clinicians and Health Systems to Address Determinants of Health

Kierra S. Barnett Ph.D., M.P.H., Brittany M. Mosley M.P.H., Kelly J. Kelleher M.D.

Claim all benefits to which you are entitled.

How SNAP Reduces Health Disparities in the United States

Craig Gundersen, Ph.D.

Be able to afford to own a car.

Local Policies for Child Health, Safety and Opportunity

Todd Litman

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NCHHSTP Social Determinants of Health. Accessed December 11th, 2023. at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/socialdeterminants/faq.html#:~:text=Health%20is%20influenced%20by%20many,These%20five%20categories%20are%20interconnected>
2. The World Health Organization. Social Determinants of Health: Overview. Accessed Dec 12th, 2023 at https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1.
3. Marmot M. The health gap: doctors and the social determinants of health. *Scandinavian journal of public health*. 2017 Nov;45(7):686-93.

4. The *Townsend Centre for International Poverty*. Health Inequalities. Accessed on December 12th, 2023 at <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/poverty/healthinequalities.html>.
5. Shrider EA, Creamer J, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-280, Poverty in the United States: 2022 , U.S. Government Publishing Office, Washington, DC, September 2023.