

#155 Nicolle Siegart

Advisor(s): Crystal Marquez

Development of a Social Determinants of Health screening protocol during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Background

Historically, pandemics have widened existing gaps in financial, social, and health-related resources. Medical students recognized the need for a new system of communicating with our ambulatory population to evaluate and address their health-related social needs. We created a needs assessment tool utilizing student volunteers to contact patients by phone, assess their needs, and address them.

Methods

We developed a screening tool using existing validating tools, including the AHC HRSN, PRAPARE toolkit, and AAFP Social Needs Screening Tool. We selected the needs to assess based on three criteria: 1) High quality evidence to support the effect of the need on health outcomes and utilization; 2) Availability of hospital or community resources to meet the need; 3) The need is unlikely to be addressed by other providers during the pandemic. We identified services that could address patient needs, partnering with social workers and community based organizations to determine how they were serving patients in our zip code. The resources were compiled in a database. Student callers used a standard script and protocol for addressing needs, which included both short-term and long-term solutions.

Results

In the first six weeks of the project's implementation, 26 students called a total of 1,414 patients from four ambulatory suites. Of these patients called, 393 calls resulted in at least one positive trigger identified, in response to which callers generated 32 social work referrals, 217 refill requests, 143 appointment requests. A research committee has been organized to generate project ideas from the pool of data collected and analyze individual social determinants of health while conducting follow-up studies.

Implications

The initial results of our outreach demonstrate a positive effect on patient interaction with the healthcare system. We have developed a unique and flexible model of communicating with patients and evaluating social determinants.

Additional contributors to this project:

Marco Stillo

Lucy Bickerton

Dr. Christina Pardo