

Title: Healthcare utilization following engagement with social care navigation in a pediatric continuity clinic

Background: Despite policies promoting social determinants of health (SDoH) screening and intervention in pediatrics, it is unclear what influence such interventions have on subsequent health care use.

Objective: Assess impact of SDoH navigation services on use of pediatric preventive and acute care.

Methods: Retrospective analysis of electronic medical records for children ages 0-18 obtaining care in a pediatric continuity clinic with an embedded SDoH navigation program. Multivariable regression analyses explored the extent to which differing levels of interaction with the program were associated with health service utilization over the 12 months following initial SDoH screen, accounting for differences in demographics, baseline health services use, and comorbidities.

Results: Among 1269 children included in the sample, 490 (38.6%) either did not complete or had negative SDoH screens, 61 (5%) had positive screens without further interaction with the SDoH navigation program, 335 (26%) completed intake only, and 383 (30%) engaged with the program for at least one follow-up encounter. Compared to those with no interactions with the SDoH program (no screen or negative screen), those with positive screens were similar in age, race, and insurer, but more often had comorbid mental health diagnoses (anxiety, ADHD, depression), and used fewer health services in the year prior to their SDoH screening encounter. Accounting for demographics and baseline health services use, children engaged with the SDoH navigation program had greater health services use in the subsequent year (well child/preventive care and ED visits), similar rates of injuries and influenza vaccination, but were less likely to have up-to-date vaccination status by the end of the observation period.

Conclusion: Evidence for beneficial impact of engagement with the SDoH navigation program on healthcare use and outcomes was mixed, with increased health services use among children with positive screens, but persistent gaps in vaccinations despite those increases.