



STARFIELD SUMMIT

...where primary care research inspires policy and practice

## STARFIELD HEALTH EQUITY SUMMIT ISSUE BRIEF

### Theme: Social Determinants of Health in Primary Care

Title of IGNITE Presentation Topic:

Improving patient outcomes by enhancing student understanding of social determinants of health

Why This Is an Important Topic to Address (brief description):

Examination of the social determinants of health (SDH) provides a broad context for explaining health and deviations from health by factoring in the social and physical environments of individuals, groups, and communities in efforts to promote health and reduce health disparities. Taking a two-step process to address individual level social determinants and subsequently integrate SDH into curriculum design can 1) address student's individual level social determinants to minimize barriers to achieving educational goals and also enhances student's ability to identify SDH in the populations they serve. Further, this approach to understanding health disparities requires a new conceptualization of nursing education in general, in order to help students, identify and understand the impact of adverse physical and social environments and become empowered to bring about positive change to enhance their career development and leadership abilities in order to bring about health equity. It is critical to integrate the relationships among SDH, health access, health disparities, and health equity throughout curriculums along with related learning experiences to truly imbed this knowledge in the nursing student's critical thinking process.

What We Think We Know (Bulleted evidence + Seminal references):

- There is strong evidence of the importance of ensuring that all health professional students, including nursing students world-wide, have a thorough knowledge base, understanding of the evidence, and the cultural sensitivities and competencies to effectively address health inequities and SDH.
- The World Health Organization, in conjunction with the Commission on Health Disparities, has recommended that educational institutions and relevant ministries integrate SDH into standard and compulsory training of medical and health professions students.
- It is thus essential that nursing education give priority to ensuring high visibility to the relationships among health equity concepts, that attention to these concepts be woven throughout academic programs in theoretical, scientific, and experiential experiences, and that competency and commitment for addressing health disparities/inequalities be designated as a program outcome.

## Questions for Group Discussion

### Questions to Address in Group Discussion:

- What are the barriers to addressing the students individual level social determinants of health? (Preparedness and resources for addressing identified barriers)
- How to evaluate students' understanding of SDH after infused in curriculum (simulations, clinical evaluation)?
- How do you infuse SDH throughout the curriculum especially when you don't have control over individual faculty courses? (Faculty development, commitment by faculty to infuse into individual courses and curriculum review of full curriculum to identify how each course is addressing)

### Implications for Action (In Research, Education, Policy, Practice and Organizational and Community Action):

- Development of and commitment to inter-professional activities that highlight acquisition of SDH data from patients at different levels, how the information can be used to support the patient and improve health outcomes.
- Integrate requirements for infusing SDH throughout curriculum.
- Resource development for addressing student individual level SDH.

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