

Equity-Conscious Approaches to Orthopaedic Surgery: Results from a Collaborative Prospective Social Needs Screening Program at an Orthopaedic Trauma Surgery Clinic

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INTRODUCTION: The integration of Social Drivers of Health (SDOH) screening into routine healthcare practices is essential for identifying patient challenges, improving health outcomes, and addressing racial and socioeconomic health inequity. Recognizing the importance of SDOH, a screening program was initiated at our institution. This study aims to present the outcomes of this program and to discuss the broader implementation of SDOH screening within orthopaedic practices.

METHODS: An SDOH screening program targeting food, transportation, housing, and financial insecurity risk was launched at our institution's Orthopaedic Trauma Clinic. The methodology encompassed identification of patients requiring screening, the screening process itself, and a systematic referral process to eligible social needs resources through Medicaid 1119 Waiver programs. A collaborative effort was undertaken between nursing and a surgeon champion who conducted bimonthly meetings and aided in implementation of a data dashboard. Descriptive statistics were conducted.

RESULTS: Over the 15 months of its operation, a total of 6,462 patient visits were recorded. Of these, 3,939 visits were identified as requiring SDOH screening. The screening rates showed an impressive upward trajectory from the inception of the program, starting at 0% and escalating to a monthly average of 64% by the program's conclusion, with a peak screening rate of 90.8%. Regarding screening outcomes, 1,445 unique patients were screened. Cumulatively, 10.9%, 10.3%, 6.9% and 16.9% of patients faced food, housing, transportation, and financial insecurity, respectively.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: Significant screening rates and a high prevalence of social needs among patients in this program underscore the intersection of socio-economic factors with health recovery in orthopaedic trauma care. Our findings advocate for the integration of SDOH screenings in orthopaedic practices to enhance patient care and advance health equity. Future efforts should focus on standardizing screening protocols and fostering interprofessional collaboration for effective implementation and closed loop resource coordination.

