Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Unconditional Cash Transfers for Preterm Neonates: Evidence, Policy Implications, and Next Steps for Research

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To address socioeconomic disparities in the health outcomes of preterm infants, we must move beyond describing these disparities and focus on the development and implementation of interventions that disrupt the factors contributing to them. Unconditional cash transfers (UCTs), which provide unrestricted payments to individuals or households, can help mitigate income disparities and improve health outcomes. While UCTs have been utilized for other vulnerable populations, their full potential has yet to be realized for low-income families with preterm infants, who face significant financial strain. In this perspective, we review evidence supporting UCTs as an intervention for children in the U.S. (including those born term and preterm), discuss the potential benefits of recurring UCTs to low-income families of preterm infants, and propose a conceptual model through which UCTs may improve outcomes for preterm infants. We conclude with potential policy levers for implementing UCTs and key unanswered questions for researchers.

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