Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

The Role of Social Determinants in Diagnosis Timing for Fetal Care Center-eligible Conditions: A Scoping Review

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Timely identification of fetal conditions enables comprehensive evaluation, counseling, postnatal planning, and prenatal treatments. This study assessed the existing evidence on how social determinants of health (SDOH) influence diagnosis timing of fetal conditions appropriate for care in fetal care centers (FCCs). Eligible studies were conducted in the U.S. and published in English after 1999. We employed the Healthy People 2020 SDOH framework to categorize and analyze data from 16 studies, where 86% focused solely on congenital heart disease (CHD). Studies primarily focused on individual-level SDOH, with only 36% addressing structural-level factors. A total of 31 distinct indicators of SDOH were identified, with 68% being unique to individual studies. Indicators often varied in definition and specificity. Three studies covered all five SDOH categories in the Healthy People 2020 Framework. Studies revealed varying and often conflicting associations with SDOH indicators, with race and ethnicity being the most explored (100%), followed by socioeconomic status (69%), maternal age (57%), residence (43%), and structural factors (29%). Our findings highlight the need for more comprehensive research, including conditions beyond CHD, and the establishment of consensus on indicators of SDOH. Such efforts are necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying factors driving disparities in fetal diagnosis and treatment.

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