

Universal Screening for Social Determinants of Health: A Quality Improvement Initiative

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Problem Statement

Social determinants of health (SDOH) have been identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "non-medical factors" that affect health outcomes; lack of transportation, and poor health illiteracy contribute to health inequities that are seen globally (WHO, 2021). At a suburban hospital in 2021, 71,463 patients were served in the Emergency Department (ED) with varying social needs to include poverty and lack of transportation (AACDH, 2022). A nurse navigator (NN) role was instituted to address the SDOH needs of these patients, but no screening process to generate referrals to the NN was ever established, requiring the NN to seek out referrals on her own through the EHR (electronic health record).

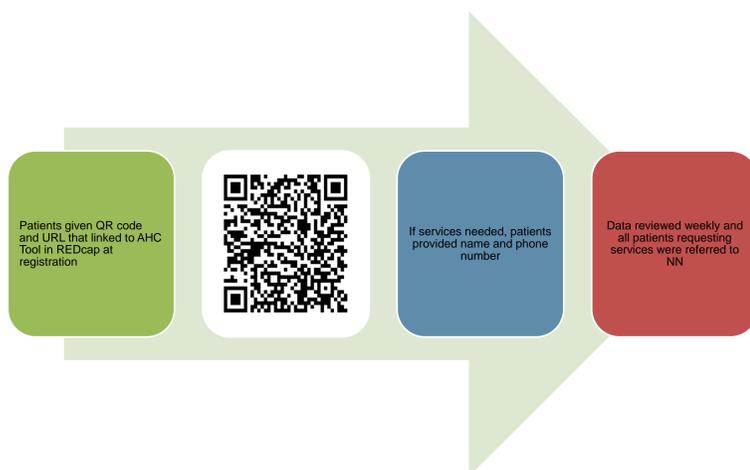
Purpose of Project & Goals

The objective of this quality improvement intervention was to screen all eligible patients for SDOH needs using a modified version of the AHC screening tool and to provide subsequent follow up through the NN to all those that screen positive on the screening tool and request services.

Project Goal 1: 100% of eligible patients will be screened with the modified AHC screening tool

Project Goal 2: 100% of those requesting services will be referred to the NN within a week

Methods



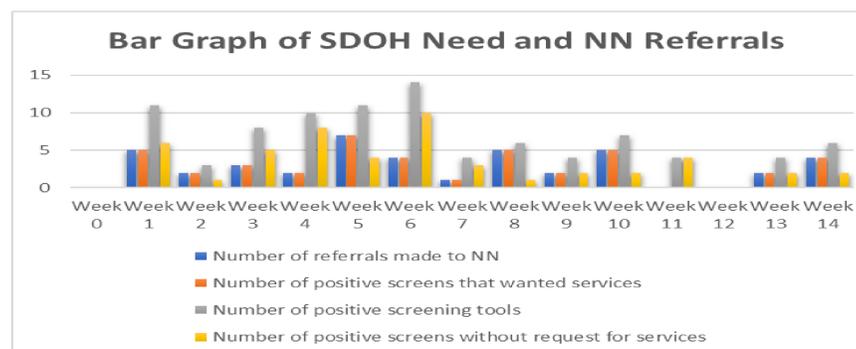
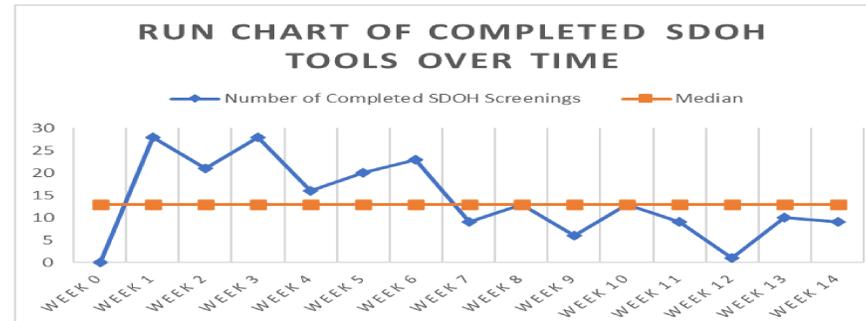
Results

The project took place over 14 weeks in the fall of 2022. A total of **12,022 patients** were eligible to complete the voluntary screening tool.

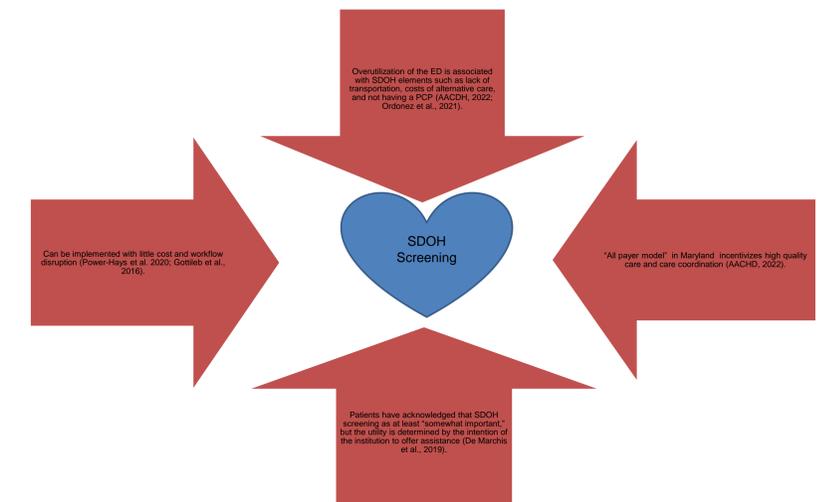
The intervention resulted in **206 screening tools** being completed, **92 patients** identifying at least **1 SDOH need** and **42 patients** requesting services.

Out of the 42 patients requesting services, all were referred to the NN within a week.

The data demonstrated that only **1.7%** of eligible patients participated in the QI initiative. **Eighty-three percent** of the total completed screens were executed during Quality improvement- project lead (QI-PL) rounds.



Discussion



Conclusions

SDOH screening in the ED is an important and efficacious initiative. Patient participation appears to be associated with direct intervention with the QI-PL, signifying that the screening process likely requires designation of screening completion with certain clinical staff in order to ensure a more expansive turnout. Patients continue to access care with unmet SDOH needs that can impact health outcomes. Connection with a NN once screening is completed is something that can easily be achieved if resources are already established. More immediate NN follow up can occur if the screening tool is built into the EHR and prompts a referral to the NN.

References

