

# The Role of Social Determinants in Health Outcomes: Have We Missed What We Breathe?

Over the last few years, the health-care profession has come to understand the worrying influence of social determinants on health. These determinants are the places where individuals are born, grow, live, work, and age which influences numerous health risks and health-related results. Interpersonal and environmental factors such as income, educational level, living conditions, work, and personal and social support can explain more of the variation in people's health and longevity than actual health-care services.

## APPRECIATION OF SOCIAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE HEALTH

According to the WHO, social determinants of health (SDOH) are the social conditions that impact health other than biological and genetic;<sup>[1]</sup> they are the social circumstances of development, which involve health outcomes of individuals and groups.

The evidence: The SDOH is defined as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age,<sup>[2]</sup> including the primary factors that shape their health.

## INCOME AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

In this regard, economic stability can be accredited as the main social determinant of a myriad of factors that define health. For example, the higher income earners get the best health-care services, well-balanced diet, and better shelters. On the other hand, people belonging to the lower categories have constraints when it comes to these necessities. Observed withers of financial stress indicated that experiences related to financial instability resulted in a high prevalence of cases of compulsion, anxiety, depression, cardiovascular diseases, and other diseases as compared to providers of psychological stability.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

It is evident that education has the ability significantly to influence the health status of society. Health literacy the practical application of health information gained by persons with education can be attributed to educational attainment. Education influences healthy practices such as exercising, seeing a doctor, and taking prescribed drugs through positive correlation. Besides, education is known to have a positive relationship with employment or income indicating another positive input on health.

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Serious health consequences are associated with conditions or circumstances inherent in individuals' physical surroundings.

Stagnant illness-prone living spaces, toxic emissions, and hazardous workplace increase the likelihood of acquiring respiratory ailments, accident occurrences, and permanent diseases. Proper accessibility to recreational sites, fresh air, and water are a part of the essential healthy living conditions. The physical planning and social measures aimed at the enhancement of the living standards, therefore, have a wide implication on the health of the populace of the city.

## SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The wellness of a person also depends on the social networks and the involvement in the community. Stress and life problems are detrimental to a person's psychological health; on the other hand, positive interpersonal connections can help avoid these bad consequences. On the other hand, lack of social interaction and social inclusion enemy result in poor mental health and substance use, among other diseases. Engagement in communities, inclusion, and supportive policies play a vital role in enhancing health among the people.

## HEALTH-CARE ACCESS AND QUALITY

The availability of health care and the kinds of health care a one person receives are some of the most basic rights of man. Access to health care is known to vary across different communities and on matters of preventable disease or conditions, the less a community is endowed with health-care facilities the worse off they are. Furthermore, it throws light on the variation of the quality of the health-care services resulting in variations in the health status of patients. Attempts to promote equal access for all groups to quality health-care services are crucial in managing the issue of inequalities.

## ADDRESSING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS: POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

Since SDOH affect health very much,<sup>[3]</sup> solving these factors is very sensitive and needs approaches from different sectors. Hence, the policies and interventions designed to enhance social determinants could enhance health and lessen the general costs on health care. Here are some strategies:

### Economic policies

Measures such as the living wage policies and job protection policies alongside economic policies that will provide for the low-income earners help in decreasing the economic fluctuations which in turn eradicates the related health risks.

## Education initiatives

Education, especially in developing countries or poor areas, can be proved to increase people's health knowledge and healthy behaviors.

## Environmental regulations

The visibility of menial rights which include decent housing, no-polluted air and water, and safety at workplaces help reduce various health complications.

## Community development

Encouraging an individual's interaction with other people through community centers, support groups, and social services increases an individual's access to social support.

## Health-care access

Thus, the health-care disparities can be solved through approaches for instance through universal policy like universal health coverage, and enhancement of quality of the available services in the course of medical specialties in regions that are underprivileged.

## BREATHING BAD AIR AND HEALTH OUTCOMES

According to WHO, the global population is exposed to bad air and approximately 9 out of 10 individuals inhale unhealthy air. In the last 6 years, the average of ambient air pollution has kept a high level and approximately constant, although some of it is in decreased in certain zones in Europe and the Americas.

Clean air is a basic component of human health and well-being, and polluted air has severe consequences on health. Air pollution is chiefly characterized by pollutants such as particulate matter (PM), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, and Ozone. These pollutants are produced from engine exhausts, and industries, and are even naturally occurring in Form, for instance in fires.

## RESPIRATORY AND CARDIOVASCULAR IMPACT

Inhalation of polluted air is always associated with health risks, especially in the respiratory system. Inhalable PM like PM<sub>2.5</sub> is very dangerous because these particles can get deep into the lungs, and can increase asthma, bronchitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Long-term exposure has adverse effects on pulmonary function, predisposing the patients to pulmonary infections and even possibly malignant lungs.

The continuation of living in such conditions has adverse effects also to the cardiovascular system of the people. These pollutants for example fine particulates and NO<sub>2</sub> can transude into the blood vessels, therefore exerting systemic inflammatory and oxidative stress on the body. This increases the threat of getting a heart attack, stroke, or hypertension

## VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Some people are more vulnerable to the effects of air pollution than others are. The various groups include the elderly, the

children the sick the poor, and patients with lung morbidities. The harms of polluted air can also affect pregnant women causing preterm birth and low birth weight that pose future repercussions<sup>[4-6]</sup> on the unborn child.

## THE NEED FOR ACTION

By instating strict environmental regulations accompanied by the use of cleaner technologies, human quality of life can be enhanced greatly. Local perceptions and public measures, for instance, avoidance of fossil energy resources, and supporting active environment programs are also very essential.<sup>[7]</sup> Finally, battling air pollution would go a long way in promoting healthier futures for the inhabitants and decreasing the rate of disease caused by impaired air quality. The detailed actual measures to be taken are beyond the scope of this editorial.

Some of the common sources for indoor air pollution include the use of incense sticks, wall paints, perfumes, air fresheners, and cleaning items among others. In this regard, acacia palm, snake plant, or money plant ensures a significant boost in the quality of air inside the building. These plants are special in their ability to remove toxins, purify the air, and help in adding oxygen in the air environment. Second, the air quality of commercial areas in large cities may be enhanced through creating of so-called carbon sinks, such as parks. Green regions are said to play the role of a lung whereby it can be illustrated that they remove carbon dioxide and other gases. Such concepts<sup>[8]</sup> can make the indoor and outdoor environments healthier if they are integrated properly.

## CONCLUSION

It is important to assess and influence SDOH to implement successful health equity and enhance the general health of patients. But most of the time, the importance of the quality of the air being circulated to the health of the people has not been well addressed. Pollution is another determinant, which affects respiratory, cardiovascular, and developmental health, especially in sensitive groups of the population. In order to ensure that there is a positive impact on communities, we must thus have environmental health interventions interact with other social and economic reforms. We need improved and more enhanced public health initiatives with a special reference to breathing healthier air for the general population's overall well-being.

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