

Positive Quality Intervention: Social Determinants of Health in Cancer

Description: This PQI identifies social determinants of health (SDOH) as they relate to cancer patients and incorporates strategies to address patients’ social needs.

Background: Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environment where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age, which have an impact on various healthcare matters. Economic stability; education; health and health care; neighborhood and built environment; and social and community context are the five domains of SDOH.¹ The domains are interconnected, as patients with low economic stability (LES) may reside in environments with high air pollutants, food deserts and unsuitable housing. Patients with LES have increased odds of lacking health insurance, formal education and transportation to appointments which can exacerbate oncology outcomes from adherence to health literacy issues.² Lack of access to education and/or receiving poor quality of education may prevent cancer patients from achieving optimal health outcomes due to a lack of understanding of their care plan. To promote more equitable care for cancer patients, it is pivotal to understand different aspects of SDOH so that healthcare workers are better equipped to facilitate quality care. In a cross-sectional survey of 165 physicians in oncology and hematology, 93% agreed that SDOH had a significant impact on their patient’s health outcomes. Additionally, 81% of physicians indicated that they and their staff had limited time to spend assisting patients with social needs and 76% reported that assistance programs (to help patients with social needs) were not readily accessible.³ This PQI provides a social need screening assessment kit derived from the Health Leads Social Needs Screening Toolkit to assist all healthcare workers identify social needs for cancer patients and provide recommendations to address those needs.⁴

PQI Process:^{4,5,6} Table 1 below lists key questions for nurses/medical assistance to ask patients during the **pre-screening** stage of their appointment, in order to identify social needs and provides recommendations/resources to address those needs **during** their care with the clinician. Refer patients to social work, counseling services, case management, and patient navigation as appropriate.

1. In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn’t enough money for food? (Yes/No)
2. Are you worried that in the next 2 months, you may not have stable housing? (Yes/No)
3. In the last 12 months, has the electric, gas, oil, or water company threatened to shut off your services in your home? (Yes/No)
4. In the last 12 months, have you ever had to go without health care because you didn’t have a way to get there? (Yes/No)
5. Do you ever need help reading hospital materials? (Yes/No)
6. Do problems getting childcare make it difficult for you to work or study? (Yes/No/Not applicable)
7. Do you feel that you lack companionship? (Yes/No)
8. Do you experience violence or emotional trauma in or outside of home? (Yes/No)
9. Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems? (Circle Response)

IMPORTANT NOTICE: NCODA has developed this Positive Quality Intervention platform. This platform is intended as an educational aid, does not provide individual medical advice, and does not substitute for the advice of a qualified healthcare professional. This platform does not cover all existing information related to the possible uses, directions, doses, precautions, warning, interactions, adverse effects, or risks associated with the medication. The materials contained in this platform do not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation, or favoring of this medication by NCODA. NCODA does not ensure the accuracy of the information presented and assumes no liability relating to its accuracy. All decisions related to taking this medication should be made with the guidance and under the direction of a qualified healthcare professional. It is the individual’s sole responsibility to seek guidance from a qualified healthcare professional. *Updated 12.19.23*

<p>a. Little interest or pleasure in doing things?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not at all (0) ▪ Several days (1) ▪ More than half the days (2) ▪ Nearly every day (3) <p>b. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not at all (0) ▪ Several days (1) ▪ More than half the days (2) ▪ Nearly every day (3)
10. As of today, do you have a job? (Yes/No)
11. Do you currently have health insurance? (Yes/No)
12. In the last 12 months, have you needed to see a doctor, but could not because of the cost? (Yes/No)

Patient-Centered Activities:

Question Number	Recommendations / Resources if patient answers “yes”
1	<p>Assess the patient for any language barriers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate any family members ability to accurately translate • Utilize internal staff as translators (if applicable) • Certified phone translation services are available
2	<p>Refer patients to the following resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA SNAP Program • Feeding America’s Local Foodbank Locator • FindHelp.org
3	<p>For local housing assistance, refer patients to the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Resource Locator. HUD also provides numerous housing assistance resources on the Housing Assistance Exchange.</p>
4	<p>Those who may need assistance paying their home energy bills may be eligible to participate in the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Healthcare workers can help their patients assess general eligibility, or put them in contact with their local LIHEAP office.</p>
5	<p>Consider utilizing telehealth services if and when appropriate, especially for patients with barriers to transportation.</p> <p>To assist Medicaid patients with transportation concerns, utilize CMS’ Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Booklet for Providers.</p> <p>For elderly patients or those with a disability affecting transportation, visit the Eldercare Locator, provided by the U.S. Administration on Aging, to locate local transportation services.</p>
6	<p>Provide patients with an NCODA OCE/IVE sheet specific to their cancer regimen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.ncoda.org/oce-sheets/ • https://www.ncoda.org/ive-sheets/ <p>Healthcare workers can assess a patient’s health literacy using the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s short assessment of health literacy.</p> <p>For patients with low health literacy, consider using USP pictograms to convey medication instructions, precautions, or warning to patients. Along with packaging/blister packs.</p>

7	To help patients locate childcare resources in their resources, refer them to ChildCare.gov's resource locator .
8	Recommend patients taking this three-minute assessment that assess social isolation risk level and provides information and local recommendations based upon results: Are You Affected by Social Isolation? – Connect2Affect
9	Assess patients for post-traumatic stress disorders, adjustment disorders, and acute stress disorders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate psychotherapy with or without antidepressants and/or an anxiolytic. • If there is a response: follow up and maintain communication with the oncology and primary care team as well as family/caregivers. If no response: re-evaluate psychotherapy, support, education, and consider adding on an antipsychotic (if appropriate). ⁵
10	If the sum of the patient's answers to questions 9a and 9b is 3 or greater, then the patient may have a mental health need ⁶ . Utilize NCCN's Distress Thermometer and refer patients to the appropriate mental health team for evaluation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delirium, dementia, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety, trauma and stressor related disorders (see below), adjustment disorders, obsessive compulsive and related disorders, substance related/related disorders, and personality disorders.⁵
11	Refer patients to resources to obtain health care coverage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.healthcare.gov/
12	Utilize the NCODA Financial Assistance Tool to search for the availability of copay cards as well as patient assistance and trial programs for prescribed drug(s). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.ncoda.org/financial-assistance/

References:

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3. Zettler ME, Feinberg BA, Jeune-Smith Y, Gajra A. Impact of social determinants of health on cancer care: a survey of community oncologists. BMJ Open. 2021 Oct 6;11(10):e049259.
4. Health Leads. Social Needs Screen Toolkit 2017. Available at: <https://healthleadsusa.org/resources/the-health-leads-screening-toolkit/>. Accessed July 8, 2022.
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6. Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R. L., & Williams, J. B. (2003). The Patient Health Questionnaire-2: validity of a two-item depression screener. Medical Care, 41(11), 1284-1292.