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ADDRESSING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EVIDENCE-BASED SOCIAL NEEDS SCREENING FOR A TELEHEALTH SETTING

Effectively addressing social determinants of health in clinical care can be challenging, and is often overlooked. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated health disparities and the impacts of social determinants of health, increasing the importance of effective screening for such determinants and intervening and intervention to address social needs.

The student-run free clinics at Stanford University have sought to accurately and comprehensively address patients' social needs by developing an evidence-based social needs screening (SNS) protocol and integrating it into our novel telehealth model.

In describing the development, design, and implementation of this SNS, we hope to provide an example strategy for addressing social determinants of health within a free clinic setting, and to encourage other free clinics to expand locally-relevant social needs services.

Since the implementation of the PFC telehealth clinic, we have conducted 63 SNSs that have identified a higher level and broader set of needs among our patient population than our previous checklist screen. From July–September 2020, 89% of patients seen had stable Internet access and were able to connect to our video platform, and we successfully adapted our video visits to phone-only appointments for the 11% without stable access. A majority of patients (75.9%) identified as having challenges accessing affordable health care, compared to 42% who screened positive through our previous screen. We have also found that referral services infrequently requested prior to SNS implementation are now popular. For example, the SNS clarifies the utility of legal services for patients, as 25.7% of screened patients requested legal services compared to 4% of patients through our checklist screen.

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