

Special Bulletin

For professional providers

June 2, 2023

Improving Diabetes Treatment Through Patient-Centric Care

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recently published its [Standards of Care in Diabetes – 2023](#), which includes recommendations for improved diabetes care, general treatment goals and guidelines, and tools to evaluate quality of care.

The ADA's publication highlights the importance of patient-centric care, with a focus on individual patient comorbidities and prognoses. Respecting and responding to patient preferences, needs, and values during clinical decision-making leads to better treatment results.

The Impact of SDOH

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) are the non-medical factors — economic, environmental, political, and social conditions — that contribute to health care and psychosocial outcomes.

However, SDOH is not consistently recognized and often goes undiscussed in clinical encounters. Financial barriers remain a major source of health disparities. Two-thirds of patients who reported not taking medication due to cost-related barriers never told their physician.¹

Recommendations for addressing SDOH-related issues include:

- Assessing food and housing insecurity/homelessness, financial barriers, and local community support for appropriate referrals to local community resources.
- Providing patients with additional self-management support from health coaches and community health workers.
- Considering the involvement of community health workers to support management of diabetes and cardiovascular risk factors.
- Developing processes that will promote health literacy.

SDOH should be assessed and documented for every patient during every office visit; issues should be addressed as soon as they are identified.

“Health inequalities and the social determinants of health are not a footnote to the determinants of health. They are the main issue,” said Sir Michael Marmot, professor of Epidemiology at University College London and director of the UCL Institute of Health Equity.

Resources to Address SDOH

Highmark's [Community Support Platform](#) is a website that enables patients to search by ZIP Code for local assistance in the following areas:

- Financial assistance
- Food pantries
- Transportation
- Housing
- Utility assistance
- Job training
- Medical care

You can direct your patients to Highmark's Community Support Platform at:

<https://Highmark.findhelp.com>.

The ADA's Community Connection tool also allows users to search for programs and resources by ZIP Code. Go to [this page](#) and scroll down to the Community Connection section.

References

¹Improving Care and Promoting Health in Populations: Standards of Care in Diabetes—2023. Diabetes Care 2023;46(Suppl. 1): S13 | <https://doi.org/10.2337/dc23-S001>

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