

Background:

Despite evidence on the effects of social determinants of health (SDOH) in maternal health, there is a dearth of research on operationalizing SDOH interventions in maternity care.

Objective:

To determine the (1) acceptability of SDOH screening and referral among patients and clinical staff and (2) association between SDOH and adverse perinatal outcomes across four obstetrics clinics in NH.

Methods:

Using the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research, we evaluated three domains of SDOH screening and referral implementation: the intervention, healthcare professionals' perspectives, and patients' perspectives. We performed qualitative descriptive and retrospective electronic medical record analyses (2022-2023).

Results:

We conducted interviews with patients (n=14) and clinical staff (n=15) and focus groups with patients (1 group, 5 participants) and clinical staff (4 groups, 20 participants). Patients cited caring and unjudgmental interactions with their care team and expressed satisfaction with available resources; however, most described persistent challenges, including the overlap and complexity of food and other insecurities. Clinical staff were supportive of SDOH screening and referral, with varying levels of priority. Notably, staff experienced distress when they were unable to effectively respond to a positive SDOH screen, citing limited capacity, knowledge, or resources.

The average screener completion rate across sites was 52% (86% at the primary site). The most common SDOH needs across sites included social isolation (14.5%), financial insecurity (12.7%), food insecurity (8.1%), and housing instability (7.6%). Those who screened positive for 1+ SDOH were more likely to be non-White, and have Medicaid or Medicare insurance compared to those who screened negative ($p < 0.001$); and more likely to deliver preterm and deliver a low-birth-weight infant ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions:

Unmet SDOH needs magnify inequities in adverse perinatal outcomes. While patients and clinical teams alike support SDOH screening and referrals, persistent and intersecting social needs require ample resources to ensure the effective implementation of SDOH interventions.