

**National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging  
and  
National Council on Aging**

**Present**

**Social Determinants of Mental Health for Older Adults:  
A New Perspective**

**September 23, 2020**





# Tips for using Zoom

- You have joined the webinar in **listen-only mode**.
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- Click the microphone at the bottom of your screen for instructions **if you prefer to join by phone**.
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- The **slides and recording** of this webinar will be shared by email within a few days.



## Mission:

To provide opportunities for professional, consumer and government organizations to work together towards **improving the availability and quality of mental health preventive and treatment strategies** to older Americans and their families through education, research and increased public awareness.

**Visit: [www.ncmha.org](http://www.ncmha.org)**





## History, Membership and Activities:

- Formed in 1991 by a group of organizations from the aging and mental health fields
- Comprised of 100 national and state associations, state coalitions, and governmental agencies, e.g., SAMHSA and ACL.
- Co-sponsor events to highlight challenges of mental health and aging
- Identify new approaches to addressing problems.



# NCOA: Who We Are

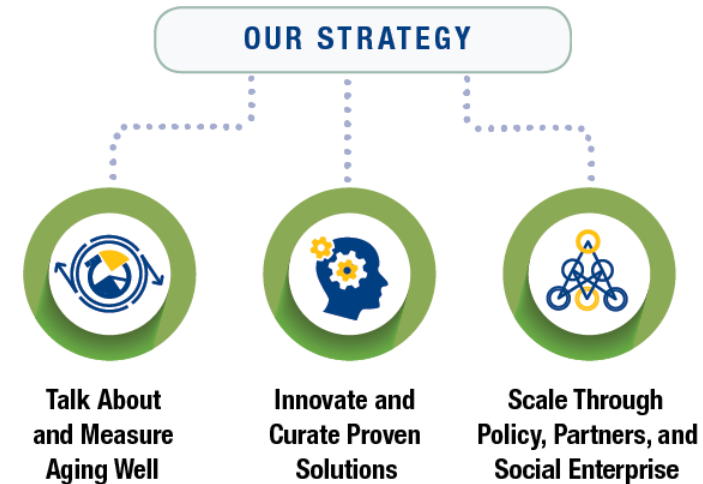
*We believe every person deserves to age well*

## OUR VISION

A just and caring society in which each of us, as we age, lives with dignity, purpose, and security

## OUR MISSION

Improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are struggling



# NCOA's Center for Healthy Aging

- **Goal:** Increase the quality and years of healthy life for older adults and adults with disabilities
- **Two national resource centers funded by the Administration for Community Living**
  - Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME)
  - Falls Prevention
- **Other key areas:** Behavioral health, physical activity, immunizations, oral health



# Webinar Series on “Addressing Disparities in Behavioral Health Care for Older Adults”

- Following the May 20<sup>th</sup> **National Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day (OAMHD)** events, NCMHA developed a plan to collaborate with interested government agencies, private sector groups, and experts to maintain the momentum and recommendations generated from OAMHD.
- A series of webinars during 2020/2021 that **target specific topics with a practical focus and accompanying tools/resources** to address the needs of older adults with mental health conditions, as well as state/local efforts/best practices.
- A special feature of the webinars will be that the sessions will coincide with **monthly, weekly and daily national mental health or aging observances**.



# Key Objectives of the Webinar Series

- **Identify specific approaches that address disparities in behavioral health care for older adults**
- Ensure that older adults with mental health and addiction-related conditions are **integrated within all MH awareness raising, policy, programmatic and research efforts going forward.**
- **Raise awareness among primary care, mental health, other health service providers and the aging network** about the impact of suicide, opioid use, and interrelated problems, and impact provider practice patterns for older adults.
- Identify **specific tools such as geriatric assessment, questions –** suicide ideation, firearm presence, opioid use and other screening tools – and detailed guidance.





# Webinar Series Roll Out – 2020-2021

- **Oct. 14, 2020 – *Older Adult Peer Support in a Time of COVID-19***
- **Nov. 18 – *Trauma and PTSD***
- **December 16 – *Pathways to Homelessness among Older Adults with Mental Illness***
- **January 13, 2021 – *Implementing Local Coalitions***
- **February 17 – *New Approaches to Addressing Substance Use and Misuse in Older Adults***
- **March 17 – *Approaches and Treatments for Sleep Disorders in Dementia***
- **April 21 – *Wrap-Up Webinar on Potential Funding Sources for Services and Programs for Older Adults with Mental Health Conditions Recommended in the Webinar Series***



# Today's Webinar

## **“Social Determinants of Mental Health for Older Adults: A New Perspective”**

**Presenter: Joel E. Miller**

Executive Director and CEO, American Mental Health Counselors Association and Chair of the National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging



# Outline of Presentation

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- Overview of Social Determinants of Health
- Review of Social Determinants of Mental Health for Older Adults
- Review of Program and Policy Responses
- Next Steps



# Social Determinants of Mental Health

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Those factors that impact upon health and well-being: the circumstances into which we are born, grow up, live, work, and age, including the health system.\*

*“Do we not always find the diseases of the populace traceable to defects in society?”*


**Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902)**

# The Causes of the Causes

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## The Fundamental Causes of Disease:

If risk factors are the precursors of disease, then the environmental and contextual factors that precede or shape these risk factors are the causes of the causes.



# Biopsychosocial Perspective

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To provide a basis for understanding the **determinants** of disease and arriving at rational treatments and patterns of health care, a medical model must also take into account **the patient, the social context** in which he (or she) lives and the complementary system devised by society to deal with the disruptive effects of illness, that is, the clinician role and the health care system. **This requires a biopsychosocial model.”**

**George Engel**



# Prominent Causes of Health Disparities and Inequities

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Social Determinants are major contributors to:

**Health disparities:** differences in health status among distinct segments of the population including differences that occur by gender, race or ethnicity, education or income, disability, or living in various geographic localities

**Health inequities:** disparities in health that are a result of systemic, avoidable, and unjust social and economic policies and practices that create barriers to opportunity


# The Social Dimensions of Mental Health

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Health begins and is dependent upon where we:

- Live,
- Learn,
- Work, and
- Play

**Zip code** may be more predictive of one's overall health than one's **genetic code**.





# Social Determinants of Mental Health: Inseparable From the Social Determinants of Health

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Ø SDMH deserves special emphasis, because:

- Mental health and substance use disorders are highly prevalent and highly disabling.
- The interdependence and mutual potentiation of these conditions with other general medical conditions is well established.
- These conditions have largely been neglected, under-resourced, and stigmatized.
- BH conditions are often expensive to treat, but much more expensive if ignored.

# SDMH: Major Factors

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- **Discrimination and Social Exclusion**

*No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.* **Nelson Mandela**

- **Adverse Early Life Experiences**

*The Child is father of the Man.* **William Wordsworth**

- **Poor Education**

*The school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to economize.* **Franklin D. Roosevelt**



# SDMH: Major Factors

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- Unemployment, Underemployment, and Job Insecurity

*If a man doesn't have a job or an income, he has neither life nor liberty nor the possibility for the pursuit of happiness. He merely exists.* **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

- Poverty, Income Inequality, and Neighborhood Deprivation

*What a devil art thou, Poverty! How many desires—how many aspirations after goodness and truth—how many noble thoughts, loving wishes toward our fellows, beautiful imaginings thou hast crushed under thy heel, without remorse or pause!* **Walt Whitman**

- Food Insecurity

*There will never cease to be ferment in the world unless people are sure of their food.* **Pearl Buck**

# SDMH: Major Factors

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- Poor Housing Quality and Housing Instability

*The connection between health and the dwelling of the population is one of the most important that exists.* **Florence Nightingale**

- Adverse Features of the Built Environment

*Where you stand depends on where you sit.* **Nelson Mandela**

- Poor Access to Health Care

*Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.* **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

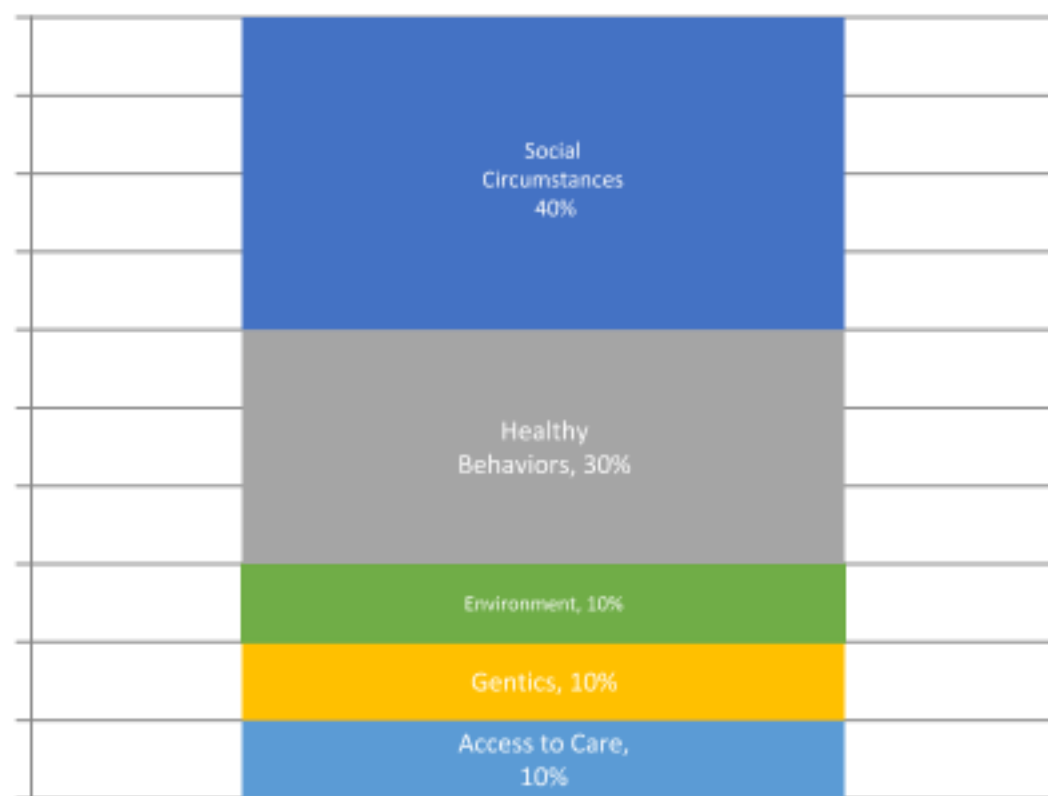


COMMUNITY PLANNING OBJECTIVES



# Spending Mismatch: Health Care & Other Key Determinants of Health

Determinants



National Health Expenditures

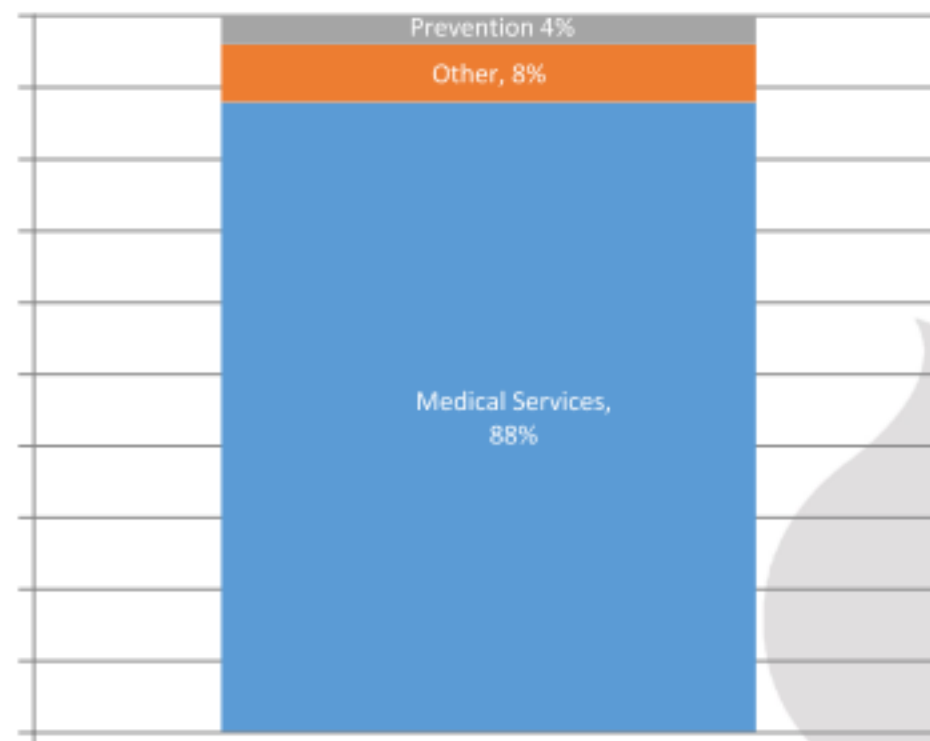
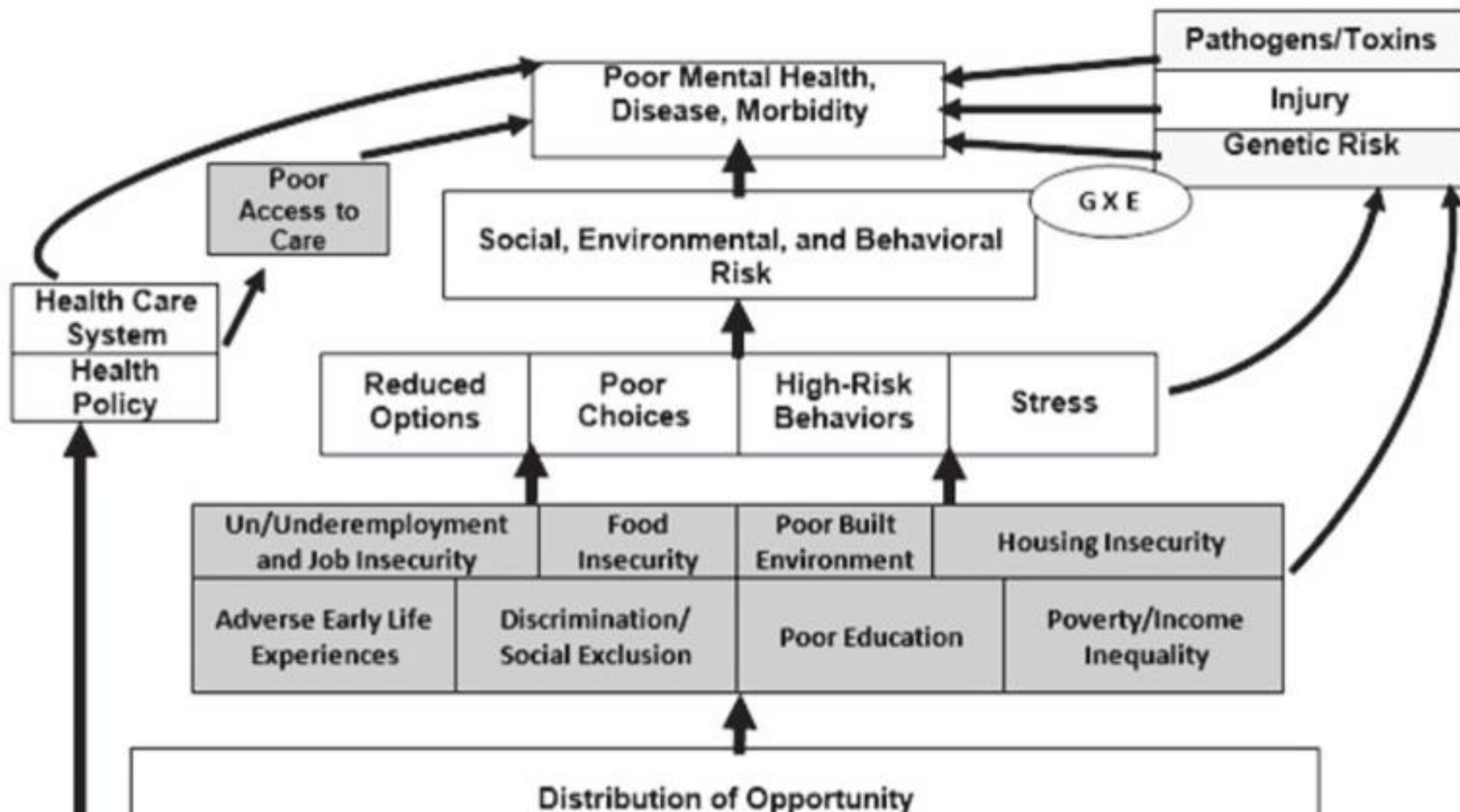


FIGURE 1. Conceptualizing the Social Determinants of Mental Health<sup>a</sup>



# Social Determinants of Mental Health for Older Adults

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## Stress as a SDMH

- Brief Periods of Stress vs. Long-Term Exposure to Stress
- Sources of Stress
  - Lack of Control
  - Mental Health Problems
  - Trauma
  - Financial Insecurity
  - Safety
  - Social Isolation
  - Discrimination
  - Transportation Challenges

## Stress Hormones Affect Mental Health

- Adrenaline and Cortisol
- Promote Safety Short-term
- Long-Term Exposure = neuron atrophy, memory impairment, immune system suppression, repeat elevation of blood pressure, cardiovascular problems





# Assessing the Effects of Chronic Stress and Discrimination

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- The impact of chronic stress, including exposure to discrimination, on the development, course and treatment of poor MH and mental illnesses has been extensively documented.
- A thorough clinical assessment should include specific probing for chronic stressors and experiences of acute/major and chronic/everyday discrimination that may have contributed to the clinical presentation.
- This inquiry should include an inventory and appraisal of past and present traumatic events and major stressors in the individual's life, as well as past and current family life and history, immigration history, health history, early losses, and relationship problems.
- Cultural sensitivity skills are essential to the development of sufficient trust to elicit frank discussion of discriminatory experiences. Such sensitivity should extend to an understand of institutional racism because so much unfair treatment takes place without intention or knowledge.



# Social Exclusion and Impact on Mental Health of Older Adults

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What are the circumstances at play that affect a client's ability to fully participate in life? **Loneliness**

- 35-40 percent of older adults in U.S. report feeling lonely
- Loneliness increases risk of increasing mental health problems

## Risks for Social Exclusion

- |                            |                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Discrimination           | Stigmatization, ageism         |
| • Racism                   | Caregiver Duties               |
| • Unemployment /Retirement | Cultural and Language Barriers |
| • Poverty                  | Communities not Age-Friendly   |

**Social exclusion accumulates over time and intersects with other SDMH for older adults.**



# Social Exclusion Impacting Mental Health of Older Adults

- Higher Rate of Social Isolation=
- Poor Social Supports=
- Higher Rate of Depression=
- Higher Rate of Health Complications=
- Vicious Cycle

## **African American and Latinx Older Adults**

- Less Likely than Whites to Trust Providers
- More Concerned about Privacy
- Aware of Strong History of Institutional Racism and Discrimination

## **LGBT Older Adults**

- History of Social Exclusion and Culturally Incompetent Care
- More Chronic Conditions – GI problems, headaches, substance use co-occurring with mental health conditions
- Higher Prevalence and Earlier Onset of Disabilities

# Social Supports for Older Adults with Mental Health Conditions

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- Solid social supports, networks are protective for mental health
  - System of concrete resources that are helpful for health care utilization
    - Transportation– accompaniment to appointments
    - Help after surgery
  - Emotional support during health changes
    - Feeling supported
    - Processing new diagnosis
- This leads to improved mental health, allowing for further social engagement and network development




# Representation of Social Determinants Impacting Older Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing

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## Social Determinants of Health

- Examples
  - Housing Stability
  - Transportation Access
  - Social Supports
  - Economic Stability
  - Health Literacy
  - Health Care Accessibility

## Older Adult Mental Health & Wellbeing

- Examples
    - Quality of Life Measures
    - ADLs/IADLs
    - Chronic Conditions
    - Hospitalization Rates
    - Healthy days at Home vs. in SNF or Hospital
    - Social Connectivity
- 

# Health Status of Older Adults with Mental Health Conditions

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- Heterogeneity of health status
- Age-related physiologic changes
- Increased incidence of comorbidity -- multiple chronic conditions
- Mental health needs often ignored
- Changes in functional ability
- Higher needs of social supports
- Different goals of therapy
- Lack of differential diagnosis with cognitive issues



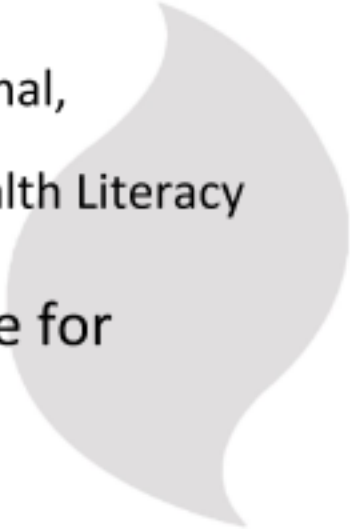
# Inefficient and Ineffective Care Determinants

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## Acute, Episode-Based Care

- Less Predictability with Care Team
- More Stressful Setting
  - Less Familiarity with Providers
  - Exacerbation of MH Conditions
  - Increased Risk of Falls
  - Loss of Functioning
- Less Opportunity to Provide Education
- Follow-Up is Often “Lost in Translation”

## The 15-Minute Visit

- Short, Time Pressured Visits in PC Setting
  - Clinical Inertia, MD-Centered Communication
  - Diminished Quality
    - Little Time to Address Functional, Cognitive Abilities & Changes
    - Little Time for Building Up Health Literacy
    - Few Geriatric Providers
  - Provider Biases and Less Time for Discussion to Correct Them
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# Health System Redesign to Promote Access to Mental Health Care


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- Changes in the fundamental nature of delivery of mental health care in the form of primary care access in close coordination with primary care (i.e., integrated care approaches) are demonstrating promise for improving access to care.
- Collaborative care models, which range from colocated care to fully integrated physical and behavioral health services, are effective in increasing access to mental health care by adopting a “no wrong door” approach to BH care. A portion of the population will not seek mental health treatment in mental health clinics or similar settings.
- Integrated & collaborative care may encourage individuals to access services they would not otherwise seek in settings viewed as less stigmatizing and more acceptable (i.e., PC settings). These well-studied models have been shown to be cost-effective as well as clinically efficacious for a wide variety of mental illnesses, especially depression.



# Challenges Ahead

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- **Health considerations for older adults**
    - Multiple chronic conditions, increased difficulty with daily activities
    - High rates of MH issues, loneliness, and support needs
  - **Over reliance on – and lack of support for – family caregivers**
    - Fewer family caregivers will be available in the future for Boomers
    - ... and what about the future economic security of current caregivers?
  - **Prevalence of economic security for older adults and families**
    - Serious implications on access to quality food, housing, transportation
  - **Challenges faced by Medicare and Medicaid**
    - Increasing per-bene Medicare costs coupled with decreasing number of workers paying into the Medicare trusts
    - Reliance on Medicaid for long-term care
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# So... What Does it Take


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- Person- and family centered services
- Prevention and Wellness Strategies
- More Providers with skills and knowledge in aging
- Collaborative team-based care
- Community engagement and partnerships



# Moving Beyond Current Thinking

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- Social determinants increasingly embraced by public and private health insurers
  - Aging networks can help with assessments and with implementation to meet needs
  - Growing the evidence base for addressing social factors
  - Focus on integrated care and developing community connections
  - Quality measure development to better capture impact and quality of home and community based services
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## Examples of Initiatives that Mitigate Social Factors Impact on Mental Health


Care Coordination  
Health Education  
Paratransit Services  
Home Modification Services

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### Social Determinants of Health

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### Older Adult Mental Health & Wellbeing

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- 


**Structural Determinants of Mental Health**  
**Examples of Policies that Lead to:**  
**Economic inequality**  
**Racism, ageism**  
**No investment in LTC**  
**2-tiered medical system**

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**Social Determinants of Health**

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**Older Adult Mental Health & Wellbeing**

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- 

## Examples that mitigate societal factors' impact on social determinants and outcomes:


Caregiver tax credits  
Political movements, organizing  
Age-friendly community development  
Affordable housing development  
Public campaigns to combat ageism  
Advocacy for improved quality measures

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### Social Determinants of Health

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### Older Adult Mental Health & Wellbeing

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- 

# Policy Interventions

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## Public Policies

- Shift the concept of mental illnesses for older adults from an individual patient approach to a public health, population-based approach.
  - Advocate for policies/laws that decrease food insecurity, end discrimination, improve housing standards, etc.
  - Offer your expertise to your elected officials (individually, or through professional organizations).
  - Cross-sector collaborations are key.
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# A Final Word on Systemic Racism

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- As we work to reduce health inequalities in our country, it is important to remember that while linguistic and cultural competence are crucial for working with older adults, broader societal patterns that disadvantage elders of color and those with low incomes, create conditions that make it difficult for them to enjoy a healthy old age.
- To reduce health inequities among older adults we need to create supportive institutions and laws that create healthy environments for older adults, and make the healthy choice the easy choice for health behaviors.
- From a life-course perspective, diverse elders will be emotionally and physically healthier when they and their families make a living wage, have decent and affordable housing, and reside in safe and health-promoting neighborhoods in a society that values diversity.



# Community Interventions

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## Cultural Norms

- Educate your communities
  - About the importance of culture
  - About the negative impact of stigma
- Use laws to change norms
  - Create a culture of tolerance and acceptance
  - Speak up when this culture is not respected



# Conclusions

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- Addressing the social determinants of mental health for older adults
    - Co-ordinated multi-sectoral policy - deliver on improved mental health at a population level
  - Engaging the political will to promote mental health at a policy level
  - Mobilizing a public demand for a mentally healthy society
    - Concern with emotional and social wellbeing, social values, culture, economic and social policies
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# Thank You and Questions

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