

Ob-gyns encouraged to consider social determinants of health

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(HealthDay)—Recognizing the importance of social determinants of

health can help obstetrician-gynecologists and other health care providers to offer better care and improve health outcomes, according to a Committee Opinion published online Dec. 21 in *Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

Carolyn Sufrin, M.D., Ph.D., from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Committee on Health Care for Underserved Women, and colleagues examined the importance of [social determinants](#) of health and cultural awareness in reproductive health care.

The authors note that obstetrician-gynecologists and other [health care providers](#) should inquire about and document social and structural determinants of health that may influence health and use of [health care](#). These include access to stable housing, food, and safe drinking water; utility needs; safety; immigrant status; and employment conditions. To help improve patients' abilities to fulfill these needs, referrals to social services should be maximized. When patient language is not the clinician's language, access should be provided to interpreter services. Social determinants of health include race, institutionalized racism, and other forms of discrimination. Stereotyping patients based on presumed cultural beliefs can also negatively impact patient interactions. Policy changes that promote safe and healthy living environments should be pursued.

"Small steps like using an interpreter, partnering with medical-legal organizations, and engaging with community resources can have a significant, positive impact on [health outcomes](#)," Sufrin said in a statement. "As ob-gyns, we owe it to our patients to implement these key practices and offer practical tools."

More information: [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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