

Commentary calls for consistent measurement of social determinants of health

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Access to quality healthcare depends on the accurate evaluation of social determinants of health (SDOH), but the healthcare industry has placed insufficient effort on this, according to the authors of a new

commentary. The commentary, titled "A Call for Consistent Measurement Across the SDOH Industry Landscape," is published in the peer-reviewed journal *Population Health Management*.

SDOH include the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, as well as the complex interrelated social structures and [economic systems](#) that shape these conditions. SDOH can be used to predict premature morbidity and mortality. They disproportionately impact people of color.

Corresponding author Ellen Rudy, Ph.D., Vice President of Research & Impact at Papa, a curated platform of companionship and support, and co-authors observe that increased funding for SDOH interventions by payers together with disjointed SDOH intervention management strategies by providers has led to the emergence of companies addressing SDOH. These companies offer services such as meal delivery, transportation to medical appointments or social activities, and companionship and personal assistance in the home.

However, the authors note that little focus has been placed on the rigorous evaluation of SDOH interventions used by companies in this industry, increasing the risk that they will have a limited impact. The authors call on all stakeholders to have an active role in the dialogue and actions it informs surrounding the demand for new measurements to evaluate SDOH need, both broadly and among people of color.

"With the size and scope of the SDOH industry and its interventions increasing rapidly, an inconsistent approach to measurement risks their promise," state the authors. To drive stakeholder discussion and support action, they also present a successful example of an SDOH intervention evaluation in a for-profit industry company.

"We can only improve what we measure, so we better make sure we are

measuring the right outcomes," says David Nash, MD, MBA, a co-author of the article, Editor-in-Chief of Population Health Management and Founding Dean Emeritus and Dr. Raymond C. and Doris N. Grandon Professor, Jefferson College of Population Health, Philadelphia, PA.

More information: Ellen T. Rudy et al, A Call for Consistent Measurement Across the Social Determinants of Health Industry Landscape, *Population Health Management* (2022). [DOI: 10.1089/POP.2022.0079](https://doi.org/10.1089/POP.2022.0079)

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