

Addressing social determinants of noncommunicable diseases in primary care: a scoping review

Luke Allen

LN Allen¹, RW Smith², F Simmons-Jones³, N Roberts⁴, R Honney⁵, J Currie⁶

¹Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

²Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

³Department of Public Health, Essex County Council, Chelmsford, UK

⁴Bodleian Health Care Libraries, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

⁵Primary Care and Population Sciences Unit, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK

⁶Public Health Wales, Cardiff, UK

Contact: drlukeallen@gmail.com

Background:

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading cause of global mortality, and their risk factors largely manifest at the community level. In collaboration with public health, primary care is well placed to assess and address the local social determinants of NCDs (SDONCDs). Post-Astana, many countries are reorienting their primary care systems to incorporate these traditional public health functions, but there is little evidence to guide reform. We aimed to collate examples of primary care organisations that already engage in this activity.

Methods:

Following Cochrane guidance, PubMed, MEDLINE, Embase & HMIC were searched from inception to 28/7/2019, along with hand-searching of references for any study designs that examined international primary care organisation(s) that addressed local SDONCDs. Independent dual review was used for screening, data extraction, and quality assessment - for which we used ROBINS-i.

Results:

Searches identified 666 studies of which 17 studies from Canada, South Africa, UK, and USA were included. All used descriptive study designs. Individual-level surveys and interviews were the most common SDONCD data collection methods reported. Fewer studies collated population-level data held by external agencies. Actions ranged from individual-level interventions to novel representation of primary care organisations on system-level policy and planning committees. Several enablers and barriers to collecting and mobilising social determinant data within well- and under-resourced primary care settings were identified.

Conclusions:

Several models of integrated public health and primary care already exist that fulfil the Astana mandate of developing place-based preventive services, tailored to local needs. Public health input at this granular level is required to support primary care services as they extend their scope of practice, and to assist with monitoring and evaluation of new initiatives to mitigate unmet health and social needs.

Key messages:

- Primary care organisations are increasingly being encouraged to assess and address local social determinants of noncommunicable diseases but there is weak evidence to guide reform.
- The different approaches described in our review can help policymakers tasked with integrating public health functions into primary care.