

Social Determinants of Health get a boost from Z codes and 211

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In recent years, there has become more awareness regarding the impact that social determinants of health have on the health outcomes of patients. These non-medical factors including economic stability, education, health care access, built environment and social support¹ account for around 80% of health outcomes². Due to the high impact of these factors, addressing social determinants of health has become a major focus in the healthcare industry for stakeholders and advocacy efforts. By utilizing resources available, clinicians can aid in these efforts while also positively impacting their patients' overall health. A few of the resources available to patients and clinicians include the Z codes for social determinants of health, the 211 phone number and website, and the organizations involved in the connected communities of care networks in certain cities.

One way to increase awareness for these social determinants of health is to utilize the Z codes for social determinants of health. These are the ICD-10-CM codes that document which barriers an individual patient is facing³. Including these codes in the electronic health record enables care to be tailored to an individual's needs and referrals to be made for services that can help overcome barriers to resources. Not only can the use of these codes enhance the social determinants of health for the individual patients they apply to, but they can also be used as data to identify what specific resources should be developed in affected communities.

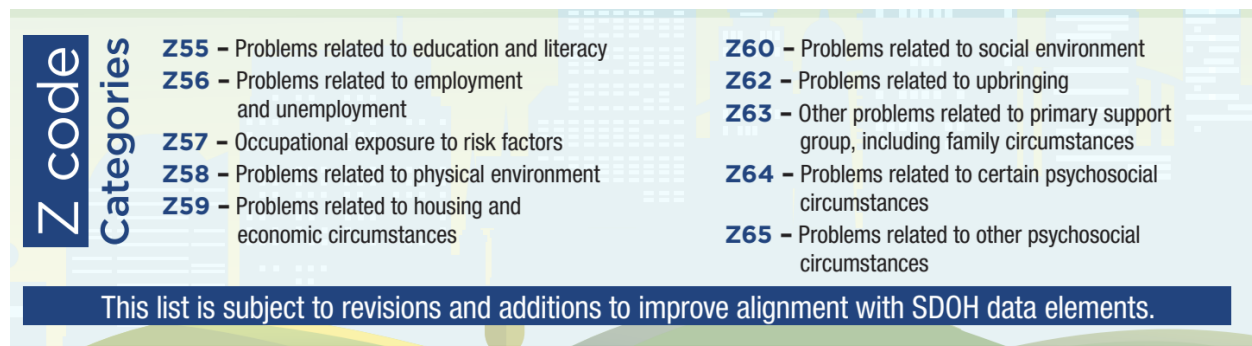


Figure 1: ZCodes Infographic- 2022³

Other resources include the 211 phone number and connected communities of care. By calling 211 and providing a zip code, patients can find local assistance for a number of barriers including transportation, mental health resources, utilities and more⁴. Patients and members of the healthcare team can also access these resources through the 211.org website. According to Parkland Center for Clinical Innovation, connected communities of care refer to networks of clinical and non-clinical parties in a community all working to provide a sustainable way to increase the well-being and safety of the area around them².

Patient-centered care includes knowing the patient's barriers to health. By asking the right questions and increasing awareness of these social determinants of health, every person on the healthcare team can advocate for patients. This can be on a direct level to advocate for a patient when learning about the barriers they face that are impacting their ability to get

treatment, or it can be at a higher level such as using Z code data to get resources brought into the communities in which patients live.

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