The Role of Medical-Legal Partnership in Achieving Health Equity

February 10, 2015

Emily A. Benfer, JD, LLM
Director, Health Justice Project; Clinical Professor of Law
“There is more to health than healthcare.”

Risa Lavizzo-Mourey and David R. Williams,

“Strong Medicine for a Healthier America (Introduction),” American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 40 (2011): S1
Social Roots of Health Disparities in Chicago

1,167,370 people (44%) below 200% FPL in Chicago

3\textsuperscript{rd} highest rate of extreme poverty in the nation at 10.8%

1.2 million children at risk of serious health problems due to residential environmental hazards in Cook County

Source: Heartland Alliance, Illinois’s 33%: Report on Illinois Poverty (January 2015); Healthy Homes and Healthy Communities (2014)
Social Determinants of Health Snapshot:
Conditions of Poverty in Illinois

Asthma
- 25% of adults with asthma unable to work or carry out daily living
- Asthma accounts for 1.9 million emergency department visits
- Higher rate of mortality from asthma than rest of U.S. population

Lead Poisoning
- 1 in 4 children have lead poisoning
- African American children are 3x as likely to develop lead poisoning
- Hispanic children are 2x as likely to develop lead poisoning

Malnutrition/Obesity
- 20% of children live in food insecure home
- 24 million households chose between “heat v. eat”
- Children in poverty are 86% more likely to be obese than non-poor peers
“It makes no sense to treat children in the hospital and then release them to the home that made them sick in the first place. Our two biggest sectors in crisis are housing and health; both are linked and both must be fixed.”

David E. Jacobs, Ph.D.
A City and Countywide Summit to Advance Healthy Homes and Healthy Communities (June 2014)
Injustice & Social Determinants of Health

1 in 6 Americans has civil legal problems

Illinois residents living below the poverty line have 1.7 civil legal needs
Medical-Legal Partnership

The doctor (and lawyer) are in
The MLP Approach to the Social Determinants of Health

Train & Identify Need

Treat Patients with direct legal assistance

Transform Clinic Practice through enhanced screening, toolkits and EHR template letters

Improve Population Health through joint policy advocacy

Source: National Center for Medical Legal Partnership
Medical-Legal Partnership in Illinois

- AIDS Legal Council of Chicago
- East Central Illinois MLP (Champaign)
- Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law Health Disparities Project
- Loyola University Chicago School of Law Health Justice Project
- Medical Legal Partnership of Southern Illinois (Carbondale)
- Metro East Medical Legal Project
- MLP-Peoria Area
- Northern Illinois University College of Law Health Advocacy Clinic
Health Justice Project:
Interprofessional Collaboration to Improve Community Health

- Loyola University Chicago/Beazley Institute for Health Law and Policy
- Erie Family Health Center
- Northwestern McGaw Family Medicine Residency Program
- Loyola School of Medicine
- Equip for Equality
- AIDS Legal Council of Chicago
- Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing
- Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights
- Public Health (Loyola)
- Law
- Community Health
- Medicine
- Social Work (Loyola)
Best Practices & Next Steps: PREVENTION

1. Robust, uniform policies
2. Better and increased communication
3. Ongoing research and mapping
4. Interprofessional collaboration
5. Raising awareness
6. MLP & SDH Legislation and Funding
7. Commitment
8. Urgency
“Medicine, if it is to improve the health of the public, it must attend at one and the same time to its biologic and to its social underpinnings. It is paradoxical that, at the very moment when the scientific progress of medicine has reached unprecedented heights, our neglect of the social roots cripples our effectiveness.”

Dr. Paul Farmer paraphrasing Dr. Rudolf Virchow, 19th Century German Physician
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ebenfer@luc.edu