

More Evidence, More Action

Addressing the Social Determinants of Health

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Since the early 1600s, scientists have recognized the importance of poverty, social class, and other “social” factors as important determinants of health.¹ Today, there is wide recognition that changes in social conditions can affect health status.^{2,3} Yet these issues are so broad, so complex, and apparently so intractable, that we as a society have made little progress in systematically addressing them from a public health perspective.

Thus, it is with great pride that I introduce this supplement to the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. In the articles that follow, the Task Force on Community Preventive Services (the Task Force), supported by staff at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), describes a public health framework for thinking about how these social factors work together to affect health. They provide a list of potential interventions to address these critical social determinants of health. They provide methods for examining the effectiveness of these interventions. And they provide systematically derived evidence of the effectiveness of selected intervention strategies in the areas of early childhood education, housing, and culturally competent health care.

The Task Force takes one further step. On the basis of the scientific evidence of effectiveness of the interventions, the Task Force makes recommendations about whether or not these interventions should be implemented. And, for the interventions with regrettably sparse research to determine their effectiveness, the

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Task Force provides a rich list of research questions that should be answered. These intervention and research recommendations are an important addition to the Task Force’s body of work, the *Guide to Community Preventive Services*.

CDC is an agency well known for its ability to monitor health problems and risk factors and to respond in times of crisis, such as outbreaks of infectious disease and natural disasters. CDC also has a key role in preventing disease, injury, and disability. With its support for the Task Force, CDC strengthens its position as a key resource for providing information about effective solutions. For decades, the scientific community has documented the role of social factors in affecting health; now, we also have a beginning for understanding what to do about some of them.

I congratulate the Task Force and staff on this monumental and groundbreaking work. Clearly, much work remains to be done in developing, evaluating, and disseminating additional effective intervention strategies for addressing the social determinants of health. CDC stands ready to work with our partners in the public and private sectors to take these critical steps to a healthier America.

References

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