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Addressing social determinants of health utilizing community health workers

Community Health Centers serve the most underserved populations worldwide. Many of the patients have complex co-morbid conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, depression, asthma, substance abuse, and communicable and infectious diseases. These health centers are located within rural and inner-city communities with no direct access to primary care and enabling services. The social determinants of health greatly impact underserved individuals including poverty, education, housing, transportation, environmental issues, and employment. The American Public Health Association defines Community Health Workers (CHW's) as a trusted member of the community who serves as a link between health/social services and the community. They facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. CHW's are pivotal to assisting patients address social determinants of health that present as a barrier to accessing health care. Generally speaking, social determinants of health relate to conditions in the environments in which people live that impact health, quality-of-life outcomes and risks such as, access to health care services, transportation, social support, language/literacy, culture, residential segregation, public safety, access to educational, economic and employment opportunities, and social norms and attitudes. CHW's are currently being incorporated

into clinical care teams across the United States with successful partnerships and outcomes at addressing barriers to care. The Penn Center for Community Health Workers at the University of Pennsylvania has provided services to more than 6,000 individuals in Philadelphia using CHW's hired from the local community to support high-risk individuals. Program outcomes include a 30% reduction in hospital admissions and improved patients' primary care access (post discharge). The Henry Ford Health System has also utilized CHW's to link pregnant women to community resources through their WIN Network (Women Inspired Network). This program, established in response to the high infant mortality rate among African-American women, showed zero infant deaths among the 200 women enrolled in 2016 compared to then current statistics of 16 infant deaths in 1,000 for greater Detroit, Michigan. Research demonstrates that CHW's improve healthcare outcomes, control costs and enhance the coordination of care for all patients, in particular low income and under resourced patients. This presentation will focus on the impact CHW's have at Charter Oak Health Center in the United States as well as in other community health settings to address social determinants of health thereby improving care coordination resulting in favorable patient satisfaction, better health outcomes and cost savings.

Health Care and Neuroscience

April 08-09, 2019 | Zurich, Switzerland

This presentation will Define the role of CHW's and define social determinants of health, giving a context of how CHWs can be effectively utilized to improve care coordination and patient outcomes; Provide examples of care plan tools that CHW's utilize to communicate with other members of their care teams; Provide information useful to advocate for the utilization of CHW's to address social determinants of health in their individual health care settings; Provide information to help influence policy or legislation surrounding CHW's in their state or country.

Speaker Biography

Nichelle A Mullins has served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Charter Oak Health Center, Inc. (COHC) since 2015. COHC is a federally qualified health center that was founded in 1978 and provides quality comprehensive health care to the underserved population regardless of their ability to pay. She is responsible for managing a \$26 million budget and overseeing all operations for the facility which serves over 19,000 patients annually in 10 licensed sites within the city of Hartford. She was initially hired as the Chief of Compliance and Legal Affairs for COHC. She has over 17 years of legal and teaching experience. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science/African and African American Studies from the University of Michigan, a Master of Health Care Administration from Walden University, and a Juris Doctor, cum laude, from Syracuse University College of Law. She is an ordained minister and currently serves as an appointed member of the State of Connecticut Citizens Ethics Advisory Board and the Governor's Healthcare Cabinet Committee.

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