Incorporating Social Determinants of Health into Health Technology Assessment for the Consideration of Health Equity - A Systemic Literature Review

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BACKGROUND

Social determinants of health (SDOH) have been shown to be major contributors to health disparities and inequities across different subpopulations and disease states. Explicitly incorporating SDOH data into HTA addressing health equity considerations may help highlight health disparities and more accurately reflect the concerns of more diverse populations.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

The systematic review aims to identify best practices and challenges in incorporating SDOH data into processes and methods for HTA to address equity considerations.

METHODS


Titled and abstracts were screened to exclude articles if they: (1) only documented disparities, (2) did not discuss equity considerations in the context of HTA, and (3) described only non-US based comparisons. Articles included in the full-text review also included key terms of “social determinants of health” Mesh heading and related subheadings in any fields.

Full-text review extracted key information on: (1) key study objectives, (2) types of SDOH used and data sources, (3) how SDOH was incorporated into the analysis, and (4) gaps and challenges identified. SDOH data were extracted based on pre-defined domains and variables used in Healthy People 2023.

Two researchers performed parallel independent screening of abstracts. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved. Full-text review was conducted by a single reviewer using SurveyMonkey to extract SDOH-specific data, and data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel® version 2303.

RESULTS

Of the 1,007 articles identified in the initial search, 13 studies were eligible for full-text review (Figure 1). Figure 2 provides an overview of the types of objectives for the included studies, with the most common being to evaluate a specific health intervention or policy (31%), and test and validate novel methods (31%).

CONCLUSIONS

Systematic literature review identified relatively few articles that explicitly incorporated SDOH variables into analyses for addressing equity-related objectives, highlighting the need for further research on how SDOH can be effectively integrated into healthcare research and policies to reduce health disparities.

It is important to increase use of SDOH variables in HTA to improve our understanding of their impacts on health outcomes and to promote efforts to consider health equity.