**Worksheet 2 COPD – Studying the system: Social determinants**

Background information

The social determinants of health are non-medical factors which contribute to a person’s health. They are the conditions within which we are born, live, grow, work and age. These factors such as education, housing, employment, childhood experiences, access to services, community involvement and overall well-being all contribute to what makes us healthy. When we work within the health system, we encounter inequalities in the social determinants of health and often see how these wider conditions of society contribute to our patients becoming ill or how they manage their disease. Understanding social determinants will help us firstly to get to the root of the problem, help us to identify important inequalities in our patient populations, and allow us to focus on preventing disease in the first place. This will reduce healthcare activity by reducing demand, which is the most important driver for sustainable healthcare.

**Activity 1. – Scanning for social determinants**

**Task: Read the scenario below and look at the Scanning for Social Determinants Table 1. How might each of the social determinants be contributing to the problem of frequent readmissions in this elderly population group?** Consider each of the social determinants of health in turn, and think about how each one might contribute to the living conditions of these patients and have consequences on how they experience life and their chronic diseases.

Write your answers in the **Scanning for Social Determinants below**. (Please appoint a scribe in your group and someone to feedback your answers when you return to the whole group).

**Scenario**

Elizabeth is 83 years old. She is admitted to hospital via ambulance with rapid onset of worsening breathlessness. She is treated in ED for acute exacerbation of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). She has a medical history of COPD and is a current smoker. In the Emergency Department, she is treated with nebulised salbutamol and ipratropium, oral antibiotics and oral steroids. Elizabeth is then admitted to the Care of the Elderly Ward.

She is discharged after 4 days after requiring only minimal therapy and is encouraged to continue her current regular medications. She is sent home by taxi. She has a follow-up appointment with her COPD nurse in her GP practice shortly after discharge to review her regular medication. Elizabeth is prescribed a new Metered-dose Inhaler (pMDI) Ventolin to help manage exacerbations. She lives alone in the centre of town near a busy road in a ground floor flat. She currently receives a social care package which includes one carer visit per day at her home for 30 min for a welfare check.

You notice that Elizabeth has been admitted to hospital with similar symptoms 6 times in the last year. You discuss the case with your team who tell you of many similar patients who are regularly re-admitted with mild acute exacerbations of COPD.

You decide to do an audit with your ward clerk to find out more about this problem. You discover that 200 COPD patients are admitted at least 4 times per year, with an average length of stay of 4 days. They are usually brought to the hospital by ambulance and go home by taxi after discharge. You also notice that 80% are prescribed a new Ventolin MDI inhaler on discharge, 15% are current smokers, and 30% live alone.

**Scanning for Social Determinants** Scanning for Social Determinants Table 1.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Social Determinant of Health** | **How do these social determinants contribute to the problem?** | **How can we measure them, and how much they might contribute?** |
| **Housing** |  |  |
| **Education level, including health education** |  |  |
| **Access to essential services (health, social services, transport, amenities)** |  |  |
| **Involvement in community networks** |  |  |
| **Food security** | e.g poor access to nutritious food increases frailty and risk of infection | eg.dietician review, patient survey, medical/social history on admission |
| **Green and blue space access** |  |  |
| **Poverty** |  |  |
| **Employment** |  |  |
| **Satisfaction, quality of life** |  |  |
| **Inequalities (social, racial)** |  |  |