**Worksheet 4 Mental Health – 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**

Jane is 36 years old. She books an appointment with her GP because she has recently been struggling to sleep, felt persistently fatigued and hopeless, and has less interest in activities of daily life. Her GP diagnoses depression and immediately prescribes citalopram. They explain to Jane that she will likely need to take them for 6-12 months and tells Jane to book a follow-up appointment in 4 weeks’ time to see how she is getting on.

Jane takes the anti-depressant as instructed, then attends the follow-up appointment. She has felt no improvement but no side effects: the GP advises that Jane should keep taking citalopram. The GP again asks to arrange a follow-up appointment, but Jane forgets to book it.

9 months after the original consultation, Jane is feeling better. She is more busy than usual after starting a new job and accidentally misses a few doses of citalopram. She still feels better, so decides to completely stop taking the anti-depressants.

Over a few days, Jane starts to feel sweaty and restless, with increasing anxiety. Eventually she goes to the Emergency Department, where she undergoes basic investigations such as an ECG and blood tests via cannulation. After consulting Jane’s GP notes, the admitting doctor notices the citalopram prescription and recognises withdrawal symptoms. She is referred back to her GP urgently to review her antidepressant prescription.

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

| **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** | e.g What is the current housing situation - is this contributing poorly to mental health? | e.g Patient surveys, social history. |
| **Education level, including health education** |  |  |
| **Access to essential services (health, social services, transport, amenities)** |  |  |
| **Involvement in community networks** |  |  |
| **Food security** |  |  |
| **Green and blue space access** |  |  |
| **Poverty** |  |  |
| **Employment** |  |  |
| **Satisfaction, quality of life** |  |  |
| **Inequalities (social, racial)** |  |  |