

Advancing health equity with communities: Clinic-based community organizing

AUTHOR: Brian Park*, Treva Drake*

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Primary care professionals, community health workers, non-profit/community-based organizations focused on health equity, public health researchers

ABSTRACT: Growing evidence has demonstrated that the social determinants of health (SDH) influence patient and population health more than biophysical factors. Primary care is uniquely positioned to improve population health, given its ethos of partnering with patients and communities to engage with the SDH. Efforts to effectively address social factors, however, have been constrained by numerous barriers that instead encourage and incentivize addressing the biophysical factors of health. A failure to adequately address the SDH partly explains why inequities persist in healthcare, as well as in our broader society.

In response, we developed a clinic-based community organizing program, partnering with the Industrial Areas Foundation Northwest, a broad-based community organizing network, and OHSU's Department of Family Medicine. Implementing a "power with" approach to collective action, we use the medical home to empower communities directly impacted by health/social inequities, and better address the SDH. We have implemented this model at two OHSU Family Medicine clinics serving underserved populations (one FQHC, one rural health center), bringing patients, staff, and providers together to build political power to address SDH and advance health equity. Recent efforts have engaged patients with local housing bills, including one that will provide \$67 million in affordable housing in Portland.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Define the core principles of community organizing, and explain how they align with primary care and public health principles of addressing upstream, social determinants.
- Describe how community organizing can be implemented within the workflow of the patient-centered primary care home.
- Differentiate community organizing from the service focus of traditional healthcare, and advocacy focus of traditional advocacy groups.

PRIMARY CONTACT INFORMATION:

Brian Park, MD, MPH
Resident Physician
Oregon Health & Science University
6514288624 | brian.jh.park@gmail.com