KAISER PERMANENTE®

Addressing Social Health in Medicine

Identifying Red Flags

Red Flag: A clue that something in a patient's life might be impacting their health

1. Finding Red Flags

Electronic Health Record

- ❑ Missed appointments
- ❑ Not filling/picking up medications
- ❑ Losing control of chronic condition (A1C changes)

Patient Visit/Conversation

- ❑ Car/bike broken/stolen or transportation hard
- ❑ Home issues/heat/water/rent
- ❑ Eating differences/appearance
- ❑ Taking medication only sometimes
- ❑ Living alone

STUDIES SHOW

Providers who didn't pursue red flags spent more time:

- increasing medications
- writing orders for more tests
- emphasizing adherence

Cost of missed social risks:

- Compromised care effectiveness
- Study finds when social risks were missed health care visits cost an avg $230 extra and led to unnecessary tests/treatments

2. Asking Questions to Learn More

Ask questions starting with "what" or "how." They invite more detail and help us uncover new information that can strengthen care planning and make the patient feel heard, which builds trust.

Patient Scenario	Missed Red Flag/No Questions	Red Flag Found/Questions Asked
Patient who is having an asthma flare up says, "Boy, it's been tough since I lost my job."	Provider replies "I'm sorry to hear that. It's been a rough economy lately. Do you have any allergies?"	Provider replies, "I'm sorry to hear that. How has it been tough? Is it affecting your health care?" Patient reveals that he cannot afford his medication.
During a medication review at a virtual visit, the patient mentions that he/she was not taking their blood pressure medication.	The provider renews the blood pressure medication.	Provider asks, "About your blood pressure medication, what is or are the reason(s) you are not taking it?" Patient reveals that their car was stolen, and they cannot get to the pharmacy to pick up a refill.

Kaiser Permanente. (2022). Addressing Social Health in Medicine [Online Course].
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