Nemours Children's Health Experts Outline Key Population Health Strategies in International Journal

Authors address school health centers, population health networks, pediatric payment models

WASHINGTON (February 7, 2022) – Research and policy leaders from Nemours Children's Health outline the most effective strategies for population health improvement, in a special section on population health published in the February edition of *Current Opinion in Pediatrics*. They share how health systems working alongside community stakeholders and policymakers can create the healthiest generations of children by addressing social determinants to promote equitable health outcomes across race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

In an invited editorial introducing the section, Kara Odom Walker, MD, MPH, MSHS, executive vice president and chief population health officer at Nemours Children's Health, writes that "social needs often have a greater impact on health outcomes than anything we do in the medical encounter. Understanding the range and opportunity to influence the lives of our patients and their families can help anyone who hopes to improve health."

In three review articles, Nemours Children's experts summarize current evidence and provide a framework for strategies to advance key aspects of pediatric population health: school-based health centers, population health networks, and alternate payment models.

Author J.J. Cutuli, PhD, senior research scientist in the Nemours Children's Center for Healthcare Delivery Science, describes evidence that school-based health centers play a significant role in improving health and community trust.

"School-based health centers increase participation, particularly of students from marginalized groups, in preventive and routine health, which helps decrease emergency department use and hospitalization," Cutuli says. "They also help address persistent, challenging disparities in health, mental health, and education among students and families who have experienced longstanding disinvestment, even across generations."

Cross-sector population health networks can effectively address complex causes of health disparities to promote health equity for children and families, according to previously written articles. Lead author Allison Gertel-Rosenberg, MS, vice president of the National Office of Policy and Prevention at Nemours Children's Health, describes a framework for cross-sector population health networks to enhance the impact of their initiatives.

"It is more important than ever that population health networks address causes, not just symptoms, of health inequity," says Gertel-Rosenberg. "Prioritizing health equity strategies can greatly strengthen their efforts. By leveraging multiple areas of expertise, building strong partnerships, and engaging community members as leaders, networks can enhance their members' work, gain greater understanding of community needs, and build sustained collaboration."

In an analysis of pediatric alternative payment models, lead author Daniella Gratale, MA, director of the Office of Child Health Policy and Advocacy at Nemours Children's Health, identifies emerging elements of these models: developmentally appropriate approaches, quality and cost measures specific to pediatrics, a focus on primary care, considerations for kids with complex healthcare needs, and cross-sector integration of data, workforce, and financing.

"By and large, our current health care payment models do not foster approaches that optimally address children's underlying social and developmental needs," Gratale says. "A key barrier to progress is a scarcity of pediatric value-based models that have been tested. Policymakers have a powerful opportunity to support the development of integrated payment and delivery models that promote whole child health to keep children healthy for life."

These publications support the Nemours Children's vision of creating the healthiest generations of children by caring for the whole child. Its bold strategy to redefine children's health includes eliminating health disparities and helping communities thrive economically.

"We have more to do to embrace needed infrastructure and investments in prevention and public health," Walker writes in her editorial. "Pursuit of these opportunities to close inequities in healthcare has been long overdue."

For more on the Nemours Children's Health approach to social and economic determinants of health, please visit the Well Beyond Medicine section of their website.

About Nemours Children's Health
Nemours Children's Health is one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, including two free-standing children's hospitals and a network of nearly 75 primary and specialty care practices. Nemours Children's seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a holistic health model that utilizes innovative, safe, and high-quality care, while also caring for the health of the whole child beyond medicine. Nemours Children's also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, Nemours KidsHealth.org.

The Nemours Foundation, established through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to the children, families and communities it serves.

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