Nemours

Majority of U.S. Parents Cite Socioeconomic Factors Negatively Impact Their Families' Health

Nemours survey finds significant exposure to "Social Determinants of Health"

WASHINGTON (November 18, 2019) – Nearly two-thirds of American parents of children under 18 (65%) report at least one economic, environmental, or lifestyle factor that limits their family's ability to live a healthy life, according to a new nationwide survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Nemours Children's Health System. Eighty percent of parents believe that they have sufficient resources to raise healthy children, but a majority also cite serious obstacles to staying healthy.

Sixty-eight percent of parents cite experiencing at least one of these factors in the past 12 months:

- Being unable to pay one or more of their bills (32%)
- Skipping a doctor/dentist appointment because they couldn't afford to pay for visits, or find transportation (32%)
- Having trouble paying for or getting to a doctor/dentist appointment or medicine (30%)
- Worrying about running out of food (23%)
- Worrying about their/their family's personal safety (17%)
- Trouble finding work or affordable child care (17% each)
- Being unable to access a grocery store with healthy food options (10%).

> *"Decades of research has shown that medical care is responsible for about 15 percent of health, but the other 85 percent is largely due to other factors such as education, food security, and safety," said R. Lawrence Moss, MD, FACS, FAAP, president and CEO of Nemours Children's Health System.*

And 65 percent say non-medical factors, like these, limit their family's ability to live a healthy life.

"Decades of research has shown that medical care is responsible for about 15 percent of health, but the other 85 percent is largely due to other factors such as education, food security, and safety," said R. Lawrence Moss, MD, FACS, FAAP, president and CEO of Nemours Children's Health System. "Our survey shows how shockingly normal it is for families to struggle to meet these needs that are crucial for children's health. By making smarter investments in the health of our nation's children, we can achieve massive returns, not only to a child's health, but of the next generation of adults."

The online survey of more than 1,000 U.S. parents of children under the age of 18, conducted for Nemours by the Harris Poll in October 2019, also found that more than half of parents (55%) report that a healthcare provider/insurer has not asked them about these issues, even though 69 percent of parents say they would like their healthcare provider to connect them with community resources. Only one- third (33%) say a healthcare provider/insurer asked them about these important non-medical factors in the past 12 months. Among those parents, most (68%) say they did receive a social service referral, but roughly one-third (33%) were unable to get help because of waiting lists (33%), an inability to pay for services (32%), a lack of transportation (27%), or similar challenges.

"Let's start by redefining 'health' and becoming the stewards of children's health that enable parents to get the support they need to help their children grow up healthy," added Moss. "Hospitals and health systems are well-positioned in the community to meet families' needs to stave off the long-term negative consequences these factors can have on a child's health, but only if we're able to realign financial incentives of health systems and build trusting partnerships with social service agencies, government, and commercial payers."

The survey also found most parents can be made better aware of how much chronic disease is influenced by socioeconomic factors compared to medical treatment. The vast majority (70 percent) mistakenly believe that prescription drugs have the biggest impact on preventing chronic conditions such as asthma and Type 2 diabetes.

These survey findings are part of a larger report, *Redefining Health for the Well-Being of Children*. Nemours released the report today to bring attention to the issue and provide vital resources for health care professionals and families.

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