

School: ATEC – Claims
Course: Social Determinants of Health in Work Comp Claims
Faculty: Mollie Kallen, VP of Business Development, the IMA Group

Summary

In the course "Social Determinants of Health in Work Comp Claims," faculty member Mollie Kallen of The IMA Group emphasizes the critical role that social determinants of health (SDOH) play in workers' compensation claims. With over 30 years of experience in the industry, primarily in case management, Kallen highlights the importance of looking at patients holistically to improve outcomes and mitigate financial risks.

Kallen begins by outlining some key statistics to underscore the prevalence and impact of SDOH. She notes that 68% of patients have at least one SDOH challenge, affecting individuals across all income levels. Furthermore, 3 to 5 percent of complex claims drive 50 to 60 percent of overall workers' compensation costs, highlighting the need for early and proactive intervention. She emphasizes that medical care accounts for only 10 to 20% of health outcomes, with the remaining 80 to 90% influenced by demographic, environmental, and socioeconomic factors.

SDOH encompasses a wide range of conditions, including economic stability, education, social and community context, health care access, and neighborhood environment. Kallen explains that these factors collectively impact an individual's ability to live a healthy life and recover from injuries. She provides a historical overview of the recognition and integration of SDOH into various health sectors, including workers' compensation, which has only recently begun to fully embrace this holistic approach.

Economic stability is a crucial component of SDOH, affecting everything from where people live to their ability to afford health care and other essentials. Kallen stresses the importance of assessing an injured worker's financial stability and identifying any economic instability early on. Similarly, education access and quality significantly influence health outcomes, as higher education levels are associated with better resources and healthier lifestyles.

Social and community context, including support networks and social connectedness, plays a vital role in recovery. Kallen notes that isolation and loneliness can severely impact an individual's mental and physical health, underscoring the need for a supportive community. Access to quality health care is another critical factor, with barriers such as transportation and health literacy posing significant challenges.

Neighborhood and environmental factors, such as living in food deserts or areas with poor air quality, also affect health outcomes. Kallen highlights the importance of addressing these issues to improve recovery and reduce claim duration. She advocates for a paradigm shift in the workers' compensation industry, moving from a reactive to a proactive approach that considers the whole person rather than just the injury.

Kallen introduces the concept of Z-codes, which capture SDOH-related information in health care claims. These codes help identify specific social issues, such as low income or housing instability, that may impact an injured worker's recovery. She emphasizes the importance of continuous assessment and communication with injured workers to address their evolving needs and challenges.

Effective case management involves screening, assessing, discussing, and planning interventions based on an injured worker's SDOH. Kallen encourages case managers to build trust with injured workers, provide tailored support, and utilize community resources to address social barriers. She also stresses the importance of setting boundaries and maintaining objectivity while providing empathetic and proactive support.

In conclusion, Kallen advocates for a holistic approach to managing workers' compensation claims, recognizing the significant impact of SDOH on health outcomes. By addressing these factors proactively, stakeholders can improve recovery rates, reduce costs, and ensure better overall outcomes for injured workers.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the Concept of Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)
 - a. Define SDOH and explain its relevance in the workers' compensation industry.
 - b. Recognize the importance of looking at patients holistically in the context of SDOH.
2. Identify the Components of SDOH
 - a. Describe the key components of SDOH such as economic stability, education, social context, health care access, and neighborhood environment.
 - b. Analyze how these components impact health outcomes and recovery.
3. Apply SDOH to Workers' Compensation Claims
 - a. Explain the relationship between SDOH and workers' compensation claims.
 - b. Discuss strategies to incorporate SDOH assessments in risk management and claims management.

4. Address Challenges and Barriers
 - a. Identify common challenges and barriers faced by injured workers related to SDOH.
 - b. Develop approaches to mitigate these challenges through case management and stakeholder collaboration.
5. Promote Proactive Case Management
 - a. Highlight the importance of proactive versus reactive approaches in managing SDOH.
 - b. Demonstrate methods to improve communication and trust between stakeholders and injured workers.

Primary Takeaways

1. Understanding that SDOH encompasses a broad range of factors that significantly impact health outcomes beyond medical care.
2. Recognizing the essential elements of SDOH and their direct effects on health and recovery in workers' compensation cases.
3. Implementing SDOH considerations in risk management and claims processes to enhance outcomes and reduce costs.
4. Identifying and addressing common SDOH-related challenges through informed case management and resource alignment.
5. Emphasizing proactive engagement and continuous communication with injured workers to foster better health outcomes and shorter claim durations.

Course Outline

- 1) Introduction to Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)
 - a) Definition and Importance
 - i) Definition of SDOH
 - ii) Relevance in the workers' compensation industry
 - b) Prevalence and Impact
 - i) Statistics on SDOH challenges
 - ii) Influence on health outcomes and costs
- 2) Components of SDOH
 - a) Economic Stability
 - i) Impact on health outcomes
 - ii) Importance of financial resources
 - b) Education Access and Quality
 - i) Role of education in health outcomes
 - ii) Addressing literacy and education barriers

- c) Social and Community Context
 - i) Social support networks
 - ii) Effects of social connectedness and discrimination
 - d) Health Care Access
 - i) Importance of quality health care access
 - ii) Health literacy and transportation challenges
 - e) Neighborhood and Built Environment
 - i) Impact of living conditions on health
 - ii) Addressing environmental health hazards
- 3) SDOH in Workers' Compensation Claims
- a) Historical Context and Evolution
 - i) Development and recognition of SDOH
 - ii) Integration into workers' compensation
 - b) Applying SDOH to Claims
 - i) Importance of holistic assessment
 - ii) Role of case managers and stakeholders
- 4) Addressing Challenges and Barriers
- a) Common SDOH Challenges
 - i) Economic, educational, and social barriers
 - ii) Health care access and neighborhood issues
 - b) Strategies for Overcoming Barriers
 - i) Proactive case management
 - ii) Utilizing community resources
 - iii) Communication and trust-building
- 5) Promoting Proactive Case Management
- a) Importance of Proactive Approaches
 - i) Benefits of early intervention
 - ii) Reducing financial risks and improving outcomes
 - b) Effective Communication and Engagement
 - i) Building trust with injured workers
 - ii) Continuous assessment and support
- 6) Conclusion
- a) Summary of Key Points
 - i) Recap of SDOH components and their impact
 - ii) Importance of proactive, holistic approaches
 - b) Practical Applications and Takeaways
 - i) Implementing SDOH considerations in daily practice



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ii) Encouraging ongoing learning and adaptation

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