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Practicum Site: Wellpath

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Addressing Social Determinants of Health in the Incarcerated Populations with Patient-Centered Care

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Introduction: The incarcerated population experiences a disproportionate number of morbidity and mortality outcomes due to social determinants of health (SDOH). Although social determinants account for an estimated 30-55% of health outcomes, they are not commonly addressed when looking at a patient's overall health. To address this inequality, Wellpath is prioritizing social determinants of health in its care plan to improve health outcomes and reduce recidivism in the incarcerated population.

Methods: Directed by Dr. Thomas Pangburn, many Wellpath departments are collaborating to institute a program that will focus on patient-centered care. Programs can include medical needs such as medication management, therapy, substance use disorder treatment, etc. In addition, Wellpath offers programs that address social determinants (e.g. educational classes, job training, and inmate family programs). To address each patient's needs, Wellpath created a standardized tool to allow providers to collaboratively determine specific, patient-centered needs.

Results: Wellpath has formed partnerships with business vendors who specialize in SDOH. This allows Wellpath to design custom intake questionnaires to formulate a risk score. The score determines the appropriate level of care and creates referrals for SDOH programming upon the patients release to their community, creating a continuity of care. These referrals cover various SDOH needs, from transportation, housing, employment, etc. These referrals aim to ease the burden of a patient's transition back into their community and to reduce recidivism.

Conclusions: With the incorporation of SDOH into Wellpath's care plan, the company is emerging as a prominent leader in correctional healthcare. The attention to all aspects of a patient's life and health will lead to improved health outcomes among a patient population with high rates of morbidity and mortality, in addition to reducing recidivism in a growing population that is overlooked and underserved.