



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH SHOULD BE SCORED AS SAVINGS BY THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE

The Congressional Budget Offices should score savings from public health programs.

A forum was held on “Implementing Comparative Effectiveness Research” at the Brookings Institution. Presenters at the forum were the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and Director of the Office of Management and Budget, business leaders, medical school professionals, health care policy experts, and medical researchers.

Summary

Experts estimate that more than 70% of the cause for health care is a result of public health social determinants that relate from chronic disorders. Public health social determinants include control of healthy lifestyles, non-toxic environments of air, water and land. Environmental factors of social determinants of health include safe workplaces, food, consumer products, medicines and medical devices, transportation systems that prevent unintentional injuries, schools, and non-violent living and recreational environments. In addition there are protections of people from health threats beyond their control, such as bioterrorism, natural disasters, infectious disease outbreaks and environment hazards. Obesity is one of many public health social determinants that causes over 70% of ill health, including most chronic diseases which can be prevented through healthy lifestyles.

Disability Prevention Issue

Public health social determinants, adequately addressed, prevent diminished health and disability. Community-based public health interventions can reduce morbidity, adding quality years of life that result in health care cost savings. Further, savings from programs that systematically address social determinants of health are not calculated in budgets; this, in turn, diminishes the value of these programs. However, the social determinants of public health are spread across several federal and state departments where they receive low priority. There are approximately 200 small federal programs that address social determinants of health that have lost 5% to 30% of their value or have been discontinued over the past decade. Failure to systematically address social determinants of public health has economic consequences and lessens the value of programs to prevent diminished health and disability.

Intervention

A letter was written to the Director of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requesting that the savings from programs of public health that prevent diminished health and disability become a part of the OMB budget analysis process.

Recommendation

The OMB should score savings from non-reimbursable public health programs that save costs in medical acute care settings in its budget analysis processes.