What Obstetrician–Gynecologists Should Know About Population Health

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(Obstet Gynecol 2018;131:1145–52)

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Question 1:
What is the difference between public health and population health?

Response from Drs. Jamieson and Haddad:

Population health is the way we translate what we are doing clinically every day into broader efforts to improve the health of larger groups, beyond the one patient in front of you. Population health begins with clinical medicine and expands outward to include many levels of interventions to affect the health of the population. Public health begins at the population level and uses broad-based efforts to prevent disease and promote health.

Question 2:
What scope is most efficient to study when addressing population health issues in obstetrics and gynecology (ie. single institution-level, city-level, state-level, national)?

Response from Drs. Jamieson and Haddad:

The most efficient scope is related to the specific population health challenge you want to address. Ideally, for maximum effect, you want to find national, and even global, solutions that can be transferred and adapted to fit the local context. However, broad solutions that work in a variety of contexts are often challenging to identify. It is often more feasible to identify challenges locally and design appropriate interventions that may be expanded to other contexts.
Question 3:

What challenges may we expect to encounter when attempting to address the lower tiers of the health impact pyramid? Socioeconomic factors are beyond the reach of the health care system.

Response from Drs. Jamieson and Haddad:

Socioeconomic factors are often beyond the reach of the health care system. Lofty goals, such as improving educational attainment, reducing poverty, and ensuring safe, affordable housing require input from many different sectors beyond the health care system. Our capacity for addressing the lower tiers may be limited to advocacy or inclusion in a multidisciplinary team with a common goal.

Question 4:

Do you find that studies in population health are generally transferable among communities (ie, maternal mortality in African American patients within Atlanta compared with Dallas)?

Response from Drs. Jamieson and Haddad:

Although the principles are the same, the specifics are different and must be tailored to fit the specific population.

Question 5:

In order to use a population health paradigm to promote and improve reproductive health, we must know the key social determinants of health in our specific community. How do we as ob-gyns discover these key determinants to help make changes?

Response from Drs. Jamieson and Haddad:

Public health experts in your community and the existent health literature can highlight key social determinants that may likely contribute to important population healthy outcomes. Evaluating the relative effects of these determinants requires systematic evaluation with recognition and inclusion of these determinants in the health care documentation.

Question 6:

How do we as ob-gyns learn to seek out external partnerships that may help improve our patients’ health outcomes?

Response from Drs. Jamieson and Haddad:

We can treat every encounter as an opportunity to serve as an ambassador for our patients and for our health care system. Ask your pregnant Uber driver where she plans to deliver and educate her about the community hospital in her neighborhood. If someone from your alumni association or favorite arts organization contacts you about fundraising, suggest they come have breakfast with you in your hospital cafeteria and give them a tour of labor and delivery. Volunteer to talk at your church, synagogue, or mosque about the work you do. There are many opportunities to begin to build bridges within the community.

Question 7:

You mention in your article that the Georgia Public-Private Partnership (P3) uses a collective impact model to help reduce teenage pregnancies. In your experience, are collective impact models the best way to address population health issues?

Response from Drs. Jamieson and Haddad:

A multifaceted approach to complex population health issues is generally required.