Physician Empathy: Do Higher Levels of Empathy Correlate to Increased Documentation of Social Determinants of Health?

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**METHODS**

- **Participant recruitment**: Resident physicians specializing in primary care at ECU Health on a voluntary basis
- **Assessment of empathy**: Participating resident physicians will complete the Jefferson Scale of Empathy\(^1\) to evaluate their level of empathy
- **Retrospective chart review**: Free-text patient notes from January 2022 to January 2023 by participating resident physicians will undergo thorough examination to identify mentions of SDH\(^2\)
- **Manual identification of SDH**: Researchers will manually review and identify instances of SDH in the patient notes and categorize based on frequency
- **Data analysis**: Correlation analysis will be conducted to assess the relationship between the variables

**EVALUATION PLAN**

- The analysis will explore the correlation between empathy scores and the occurrence of SDH
- Statistical methods including Spearman correlation and Poisson regression with cluster robust standard errors will be used
- A positive coefficient in the Poisson regression model will indicate a significant positive association between empathy scores and the occurrence of SDH
- We hypothesize there will be a positive correlation, with some potential outliers, between physician empathy and the documentation of SDH as exemplified in the below theoretical data

**POTENTIAL IMPACTS**

**Patient**
- Increased communication and trust
- Individualized interventions
- Improved health outcomes

**Provider**
- Informed clinical decisions based on SDH
- Enhanced ability to address SDH
- Empathy and SDH awareness

**Hospital Administration**
- Strategic resource allocation
- Targeted interventions
- Improved efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare delivery

**Medical Education**
- Integration of empathy training into pre-clinical schooling
- Emphasis on SDH awareness in medical curricula
- Equipping future healthcare professionals with skills to address SDH

**Community-Wide**
- Reduce health disparities
- Enhanced overall health outcomes in the wider community
- Improved well-being and equity in healthcare

**REFERENCES**