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Takeaways from the annual Lancaster Health Summit [column]

DIANE HESS | SPECIAL TO LNP 4 hrs ago



Diane Hess is executive director of the Central Penn Business Group on Health, an affiliate of the Lancaster Chamber.

There is no doubt that trying to positively affect the health of a population is a heavy lift, but that is the goal of the annual Lancaster Health Summit.

Sponsored by the Central Penn Business Group on Health and LiveWell Lancaster, the Lancaster Health Summit was created eight years ago using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's approach of bringing together community resources and the business community to address the health issues affecting area residents.

Each year, we focus on a different health issue that is impacting our community. Our goal is to not only define the issue but provide insights into what is being done in Lancaster to address the problem.

This year's event, which focused on the social determinants of health, provided some fascinating insights about the impact of social determinants on an individual's health and the larger impact this has on both the workplace and the community.

Our keynote speaker, Kristi Durazo, defined the social determinants as "the conditions into which people are born, grow, live, work and age."

Durazo shared with our audience the startling fact that medical care is estimated to account for only 10%-20% of modifiable contributors to healthy outcomes for a population. The other 80%-90% are broadly referred to as the social determinants of health.

Durazo also indicated that disparities in overall quality of care and population health account for approximately \$93 billion in excess medical care costs and \$42 billion in lost productivity per year as well as economic losses because of premature deaths.

Clearly, with this much at stake, addressing the social determinants should be a priority for our county.

This was reinforced by the data presented by Berwood Yost, director of the Center for Opinion Research Floyd Institute for Public Policy at Franklin & Marshall College. Data from the community health needs assessment includes the following conclusions about Lancaster County:

- Too many uninsured adults and children.
- Large numbers of renters struggling with housing affordability.
- High rates of poverty, particularly for minorities.
- Large income disparities between whites and nonwhites.
- Low rates of post-secondary education.

— An aging population.

— Poor air quality. Lancaster is ranked 13th worst nationally for people at risk by short-term particle pollution and is ranked eighth worst nationally for people at risk by year-round particle pollution.

— Polluted physical environment in general. Indicators of air and water quality place Lancaster's physical environment 64th out of the state's 67 counties

Positive news did include the fact that in Lancaster County the rates of binge drinking and smoking have declined. And the rates for both are lower in Lancaster County than in other areas.

Also, many Healthy People goals related to cancer death rates and cancer incidence and for death rates due to coronary heart disease, HIV, firearms and motor vehicle accidents have been met.

Yost outlined the following health priorities for the years to come:

— Establishing and maintaining the basic conditions that support health, including access to care, family-sustaining incomes, accessible transportation, affordable and quality housing, violence reduction and reduction in exposure to adverse childhood experiences.

— Advocating for improvements to the county's physical environment, emphasizing improved air and water quality.

— Supporting improved mental health including reducing and treating substance use.

— Supporting active living, healthy eating and less obesity.

Additional good news for Lancaster County is that work is being done to address these issues locally. In the schools, the community and the workplace, there are initiatives in place that are working to address the social determinants of health and these ongoing health priorities.

Although we still have work to do, it is good to know that through collaboration and partnership, Lancaster County is committed to the health and well-being of its residents.

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