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Abstract

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Caregiver Perspectives on Determinants of Health and Psychosocial Functioning in Pediatric Patients with Celiac Disease

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. Celiac Disease (CeD) is an autoimmune condition triggered by gluten exposure that damages the small intestine and immune function and has been linked to psychosocial difficulties such as depression, anxiety, and isolation. CeD often goes unrecognized in low-socioeconomic-status families, limiting access to care and affecting the family system. **Objective.** This presentation disseminates emerging findings on caregivers' perceptions of how social determinants of health (SDoH) affect psychosocial functioning in pediatric CeD patients in Puerto Rico. **Method.** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four caregivers in a hybrid format, guided by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities framework, to explore SDoH domains and caregivers' recommendations for reducing health disparities. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Rapid Qualitative Analysis in NVivo 15. **Results.** Findings revealed consistent patterns across five domains. Caregivers reported limited prior CeD knowledge and a prolonged, overwhelming diagnostic process, with nutritionists as the primary guidance source. Academic functioning was largely unaffected, though dietary demands fostered independence. Children were described as resilient, with occasional sadness, anxiety around accidental gluten exposure, and social isolation in food-centered settings. Key barriers included gluten-free food costs, food access disparities, limited school accommodations, and restricted healthcare access. Family support was protective, and caregivers called for greater public awareness, provider education, and community support networks. **Conclusions.** These findings highlight the interplay between SDoH and psychosocial functioning among Hispanic/Latinx pediatric CeD patients in Puerto Rico. Despite caregiver-reported resilience, structural barriers compound disease management, underscoring the need for culturally responsive interventions, provider education, and targeted research addressing this disparity.

Keywords: Pediatric celiac disease, social determinants of health, psychosocial functioning, caregivers.