

**Title:** Enabling social prescription for older adults: Connecting primary care and community-based services

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**Background:** Social prescribing (SP) is a model and approach to care that aims to address patients' unmet health-related social needs and goals by connecting them to appropriate resources and services in the community. A typical SP pathway involves the identification of an unmet social need, a referral to an appropriate community resource, participation in the referred service by the individual, and ongoing follow-up. While the value of SP is increasingly recognized at global, national, provincial, and local levels, there are many health care provider and community service barriers to uptake and implementation that need to be considered.

**Objectives:**

- 1) To explore barriers and facilitators to SP uptake and implementation.
- 2) To engage stakeholders around a SP platform and explore their perceptions on how to integrate the platform into practice.

**Methods:** In Montreal, preliminary outreach activities with local community health centres, family medicine groups, and community organizations were undertaken to introduce social prescription, present a web-based SP platform *Clic Social*, and explore provider experiences in assessing and addressing health-related social needs. In parallel, interviews with community service providers and older adults were completed. These complementary outreach activities informed a series of subsequent deliberative dialogues contributing to SP pathway design.

**Results:** Primary care providers play an active role in assessing and addressing social needs in encounters. To identify patients' social needs, providers primarily rely on their clinical experience. To address these needs, providers often refer patients to another health professional or to a community resource/service directly. Community organizations support social prescription, but emphasize the importance of thorough assessments of patients' social needs for appropriate connections to resources. Equally important, the connector must be update-to-date on how the community organization is structured to ensure that it has capacity to meet patients' needs.

**Conclusion:** To support and strengthen providers and organizations existing efforts in addressing social needs and goals, social prescription models and tools must be accessible, comprehensive, and responsive for stakeholder buy-in and broader implementation across health and community services.

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