The Social Determinants of Health Nurses Initiative: A Summary of Implementation Outcomes Among Health Units in Ontario

Background:
In 2011, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) provided funding to 36 Boards of Health to hire public health nurses (PHNs) with specific knowledge and expertise in addressing social determinants of health (SDoH) and reducing health inequities in identified priority populations in their respective communities (theme: Health and Places). This initiative is intended to enhance public health nursing care and services to hard to reach, vulnerable populations most negatively impacted by various SDoH.

Objectives:
This presentation summarizes an evaluation of this provincial initiative and some of the innovative approaches in the utilization of the SDoH nurses to address inequities in health (Cross-Cutting theme) among priority populations (Cross-Cutting theme). Aspects of the initiative assessed include: identified priority populations; roles and activities of the SDoH nurses; impacts and outcomes of the initiative; and challenges identified working with priority populations. Participants will learn of potential strategies and activities implemented under this initiative that can be considered for application within similar practice contexts to address inequities in health through nursing roles and practice in public health.

Methods:
All health units provide information on initiative implementation annually to the Ministry, through a series of open-ended questions on a questionnaire. A thematic analysis of the qualitative data is undertaken using N-Vivo software for coding of themes.

Conclusions:
This initiative has provided Ontario health units the opportunity to use PHNs beyond programatic silos, enabling them to support priority populations in creative and innovative ways, and build capacity within their respective organizations to address health inequities.