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General Practitioners' Referral Strategies with Regards to Social Determinants of Health: an Ego-centric Network Analysis

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Introduction. General Practitioners (GPs), as primary care providers, meet a large number of patients with social problems that strongly affect their health and result in health inequities within the population. Social problems are the unfavourable components of the social determinants of health, which are defined by the WHO as *"the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life"*. Literature shows that GPs only screen for social problems when they are aware of referral resources. Hence, in order to effectively identify and tackle social problems, socially responsible GPs should rely on a strong social referral network – i.e. the professionals and/or institutions they refer socially vulnerable patients to –, which hasn't been described to this day. The aim of this research is therefore to gain more knowledge about GPs' social referral networks and their strategies for developing them.

Method. Our research will take place in Schaerbeek (Brussels) with a sample of 120 GPs. First, we will conduct an egocentric network analysis, meaning that we will map out GPs' social referral networks by asking them to whom they refer socially

vulnerable patients. Then, we will proceed with face-to-face interviews, presenting GPs with a visualisation of their network in order to gain a better insight into their network perceptions and development strategies.

Expected results & discussion. This research will provide thorough description, visualisation, classification and structural analysis of GPs' social referral networks, supplemented by qualitative information that will add finer sense to these structural data.

Conclusion. Understanding the nature of GPs' social referral networks will enable more precise action to be taken on the social support provided by GPs to their patients and to adapt public policies in addressing the social determinants of health.

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