

Social prescribing to improve adolescents' wellbeing

Dr Margaret Lawler's research focuses on understanding the role of psychosocial factors in adolescents' body image and physical activity participation. She is particularly interested in the application of novel interventions to promote health behaviour change and psychological well-being among children and adolescents.

The impact of the TCD MED Research Award

Many health problems are underpinned by social factors such as poverty with estimates suggesting that one-fifth of GP visits reflect social rather than medical problems. Adolescents from low SES backgrounds are 2/3 times more likely to develop mental health problems than their high SES counterparts. Innovative community-based strategies are thus needed to reach and engage at-risk adolescents in marginalised communities. Social prescription comprises a non-medicalised treatment, where health professionals refer patients to local community-based services to meet their wellbeing needs. Preliminary evidence indicates that social prescribing can positively impact adults' physical and

mental health and reduce demand on primary and secondary care. However, little is known about its role on adolescents' health. The current study explores at-risk adolescents' perceived acceptability, health outcomes, and experiences of participating in a social prescribing service.

“By empowering individuals to take charge of their own health, social prescribing has the potential to improve children's wellbeing, reduce the risk of more serious mental health conditions developing, and decrease healthcare demands thus benefitting patients, healthcare professionals and the broader health system in Ireland.”

Dr Margaret Lawler

Assistant Professor in Psychology

Discipline of Occupational Therapy, School of Medicine

