

# SONNET

Social Needs Network for Evaluation and Translation

March 2025

## Leadership update

### What's new for SONNET in 2025? A message from SONNET Director Meagan Brown

2024 was a year of transition for SONNET, including several key staffing changes on our Coordinating Center team. We bid a fond farewell to Director Katie Coleman, Project Manager Carolyn Bain, and founding Program Director Andrea Paolino (read her [capstone message here](#)). But we were also fortunate to welcome 4 new members to our team: Collaborative Scientist Leah Hamilton, Administrative Coordinator Virginia Lopez, Senior Adviser Paula Lozano, and Program Manager Juanita Trejo.

With these big changes came a fresh opportunity to consider how SONNET can best support Kaiser Permanente's Social Health Practice (SHP) objectives in 2025. To that end, we're excited to implement a true learning health system (LHS) approach to our work while continuing to deliver on our [4 core capabilities](#) — research and evaluation, just-in-time consultations, extramural grant development, and leadership in the social health field.

As part of our new LHS approach, this year SONNET will focus on a dedicated research project built to provide more real-time insights and guidance on high-priority SHP questions. The project, titled "Opportunities to Improve Outcomes for Members Who Use the Kaiser



#### Coordinating Center core team



Clockwise from top left: Juanita Trejo, Paula Lozano, Jessica Ridpath, Leah Hamilton, and Meagan Brown

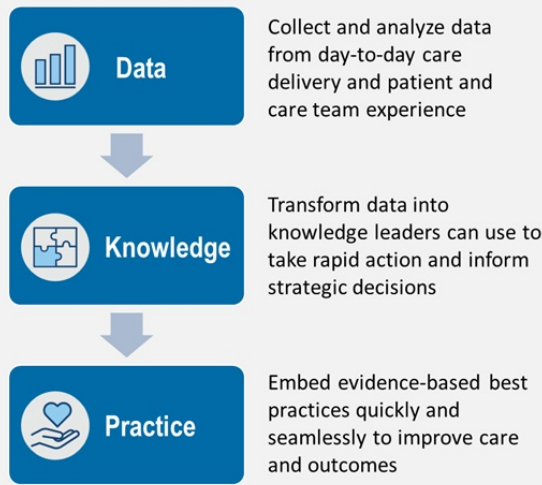
Not pictured: Virginia Lopez

Permanent Community Support Hub," has 2 key aims:

- Characterize member experiences with the **Community Support Hub** to better understand and improve member outreach and ensure we're reaching those who can benefit most from social health support.
- Identify short-term outcomes (for example, missed appointments, medication adherence) that can be used to readily assess the impact of social health interventions on members' health and well-being.

These many changes have set the stage for an exciting, refreshed approach for SONNET in 2025, and we're excited to collaborate with you all in the year ahead!

What does it mean to use an LHS approach?



## SIREN National Research Meeting highlights

Sponsored by Kaiser Permanente, the meeting featured exciting opportunities to learn, network, and share our research



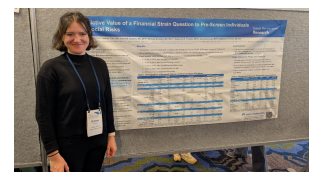
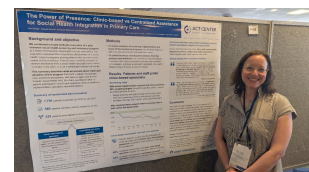
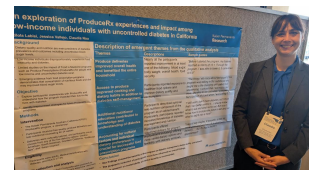
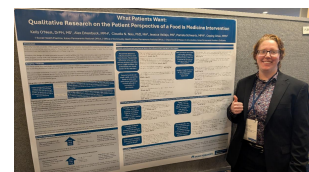
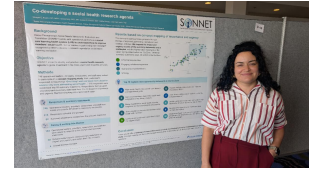
[View larger image with captions](#)

We are so grateful to our partners at the **Social Interventions Research & Evaluation Network (SIREN)** for hosting an amazing **National Research Meeting on Advancing the Science of Social Care!** Held in San Diego in early February, the meeting brought together social care researchers, practitioners, community members, advocates, and policymakers from around the country. Leaders and staff from across Kaiser Permanente and SONNET were deeply engaged — hosting networking opportunities, leading plenary and breakout sessions, and presenting several posters on our social care research. Here are some brief Kaiser Permanente highlights:

- Senior Vice President and Chief Community Health Officer **Bechara Choucair** provided introductory remarks at the opening plenary session on the ethics of health care's involvement in social care. Earlier that morning, he hosted a Kaiser Permanente networking breakfast to explore ways to accelerate and enhance alignment between

SONNET research and the Social Health Practice team's operational goals.

- Vice President of Social Health and SONNET sponsor **Anand Shah** moderated a plenary session that explored the next 4 years of social care research and policy ([view session recording](#)).
- Director of Medi-Cal External Engagement and Initiatives **Vanessa Davis** led a workshop on evaluating social health models to move from research to practice in Community Support Hubs.
- SONNET Director **Meagan Brown** summarized results from a concept-mapping process to codevelop a social health research agenda for Kaiser Permanente ([view poster](#)).
- Former SONNET Director **Katie Coleman** presented two posters — one describing SONNET's evolution and capabilities ([view poster](#)) and another focused on her work to develop and evaluate a social needs learning collaborative in federally qualified health centers in Washington state ([view poster](#)).
- SONNET team member **Alex Erkenbeck** shared qualitative research on patient perspectives regarding a Food is Medicine intervention conducted at Kaiser Permanente Southern California ([view poster](#)).
- SONNET partner **Claudia Nau** presented exploratory results from Kaiser Permanente's ProduceRx program, a clinical trial among members with lower incomes and uncontrolled diabetes in Southern California ([view poster](#)).
- SONNET partner **Ariel Singer** shared insights from the Social Health Integration Pilot she helped implement at Kaiser Permanente Washington, focusing on the reach and adoption of clinic-based versus centralized assistance for social health in primary care ([view poster](#)).
- SONNET partner **Emma Tucher** presented two posters — one on the predictive value of a financial strain question to pre-screen individuals for social risks ([view poster](#)) and another exploring the impact of health care discrimination on social needs ([view poster](#)).



*Click images for a larger view*

## Other recent SONNET highlights

### PCORI and AHRQ grants funded to explore social needs in people with multiple chronic conditions

SONNET team members are kicking off 2 new federally funded grants led by **Richard Grant** at the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research in Northern California.

- Addressing social needs to improve health in adults with multiple chronic conditions: With



a \$4 million award from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), this 5-year study aims to improve the health of adults with multiple chronic conditions by identifying the best ways to address their social needs. The study is a collaboration with SIREN and will focus on adults with multiple chronic conditions who have documented care gaps and social needs related to food, transportation, housing, utilities, or financial insecurity. Learn more in this [news release](#).

**Kaiser Permanente sites:** Northern California, Southern California, and Washington  
**Research leads:** Richard Grant, Meagan Brown, and Emma Tucher in partnership with Laura Gottlieb and Danielle Hessler from SIREN

- **Whole-person navigation: Pragmatic randomized trial of combined social resource and care system navigation for adults with multiple chronic conditions:** Funded by a 5-year, \$2 million grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), this study will explore how data-driven risk tools can help identify people with multiple chronic conditions who are at the highest risk for not achieving their care goals. The study will include a randomized trial to design and evaluate a Whole-Person Navigator to help patients prioritize their needs and develop a plan of action to address both social needs and clinical barriers that can hinder effective, patient-centered care.

**Kaiser Permanente sites:** Northern California and Washington  
**Research leads:** Richard Grant, James Ralston, and Meagan Brown




## New paper sheds light on how social health is linked to intersecting identities of age, income, and race and ethnicity

SONNET Director Meagan Brown recently led a paper sharing results from Kaiser Permanente's National Social Health Survey in 2020. The survey assessed social risk and social need among more than 10,000 adult members of Kaiser Permanente nationwide. Published in the February 2025 issue of *AJPM Focus*, the paper found that the top 3 social risks faced by members were: financial strain (44%), food insecurity (31%), and housing instability (17%). In addition, nearly one-third of members said they would welcome assistance with at least one social need.


Importantly, Brown and her team also used intersectional analyses to examine **how the intersecting social identities of age, income, gender, and race and ethnicity were associated with social risk and need**. "We found that risk and need were higher among specific intersectional groups — and in particular among lower-income, older-age adults who are Black, Pacific Islander, or multi-racial," she explained. "This points to the importance of investing not just in social needs screening but also in upstream changes to improve the social safety net and advance policies to reduce racial and economic inequities."

### Survey results (completed by 10,274 members)



#### Top 3 social risks

-  **44%** financial strain
-  **31%** food insecurity
-  **17%** housing instability

#### Desire for assistance

-  **32%** said they wanted help with at least 1 social need

### Intersectional analyses (among 74 groups)

-  Higher-income or older-age adults had **lower risk and need** — but this pattern varied by race and ethnicity.
-  Lower-income, older-age adults who are Black, Pacific Islander, or multi-racial had **higher risk and need**.

[Read the paper](#)

## Stay in touch

We'd love to hear what you're working on! Email our team: [sonnet@kp.org](mailto:sonnet@kp.org).

Did you miss the previous SONNET newsletter? [Read it here.](#)

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*Our SONNET Coordinating Center would like to acknowledge that our Seattle offices are on the ancestral lands and traditional territories of the Puget Sound Coast Salish People.*

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