

Scalar Health: Framing the Social Determinants of Health through Design Thinking

Marin Gillis, PhD

Kendra Kirchmer, BArch, MFA

Dharam Persaud Sharma, PhD, MS4 (Class of 2019)

Ryan Pham, M2 (Class of 2021)

Description:

Addressing social determinants of health is necessary to mitigate health disparities, increasing better health outcomes for all. Tackling skyrocketing costs while upholding medicine's social contract to promote patient welfare, medicine sought innovative approaches through collaborations with public health, social and behavioral sciences. We have gone a step further, embracing design thinking, a method of creative problem solving from architecture that is human-centered, empathetic, systemic, and collaborative. At HWCOM, we created a unique application of design thinking that frames the social determinants of health in a way that leads to more appropriate transdisciplinary collaborations and eventually better health outcomes: Scalar Health.

Aim: Describe the justification for and application of an innovative concept developed at HWCOM: Scalar Health.

Actions Taken:

The educational interventions concentrate on three scales of human interactions with their environment: individual, household, and community. This expands user-centric design thinking allowing for solutions that address user needs and consider impacts on households and communities. Emphasis is placed on the inclusion of both the patient AND the provider.

Summary of Results:

The prototype intervention, which launches in January, applies Scalar Health to the issue of obesity. Students examine the intersections of clinical, behavioral and environmental factors of eating. The built environment includes the community level (walkability, essential services, transportation), the household level (kitchen-scape, table-scape), and the individual (eating space, nutrition).