



## A Brief But Spectacular Take on Reimagining the Doctor's Visit

Studies show that health outcomes are worse for poorer Americans, but pediatrician Lucy Marcil is one doctor who is trying to change that. Marcil integrates free tax and financial services into her clinical care as a way to improve patients' overall health -- and finds that doing so builds better relationships. She shares her Brief But Spectacular take on reimagining the doctor's visit.

(Dr. Marcil founded StreetCred and coordinates the program at Boston Medical Center. In collaboration with Dr. Marcil, CCA Medical-Legal Partnership attorney Alice Rosenthal and Yale physician Leslie Sude replicated the program at Yale New Haven Health. The sign in the photo above is on the door of the Center for Children's Advocacy Medical-Legal Partnership office at YNH)

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Transcript of July 16 Broadcast

Amna Nawaz: And tonight's Brief But Spectacular features pediatrician Lucy Marcil, who integrates free tax and financial services into her care for patients and their families as a way to help improve their overall health.

Lucy Marcil: People trust their doctor. We ask them really intimate questions all the time. We ask them about sex, about mental health, about alcohol use. But I bet, if you think about your own experiences, you have probably never had your doctor ask you how much money you make.

**If you have less money, you have worse health outcomes in almost any disease you can think of. Poor children in the U.S. die at higher rates.** They are one-and-a-half more likely to die. They're twice as likely to be hospitalized.

So, it really is a health issue, and it's negligence on our part not to be asking about it. I had a mom in clinic last week who is trying her best to raise two lovely kids, but she's been homeless. She's been in several abusive relationships. She's encountered mental health problems.

And, as a result, it's been hard for her to keep steady jobs. With her, for instance, I asked her, "Have you filed your taxes?" She said: "I'm not going to. I only made \$3,000 last year."

And I was able to explain to her how, if she did file, the U.S. government would give her \$1,200, which would be a third of her annual income. So that's just a small example of the way in which we try to prescribe tax preparation as a health intervention in pediatric clinics.

We found that **60 percent of the families we serve have never heard of the Earned Income Tax Credit.** It's not just about getting the money back that's been withheld from your paycheck. The government is going to give you extra money. And, often, it's thousands of dollars.

For people who do know about it and are filing their taxes, they might not know that **free tax preparation** exists in the community. So it's a huge relief to them often when I say, we can do this right here in the office for you.

We have done, **over the last three years, about 2,000 tax returns and returned over \$4,000,000 to families.** The very first family that we served was a great-grandmother who had custody of a 2-year-old. And after we got her back several thousand dollars, she said to me: "I was able to buy luxuries. I bought a winter coat and fresh vegetables."

And we live in the United States of America. A winter coat and vegetables should not be luxuries when you're trying to raise a child. So, the patients that I have that have used StreetCred, I feel I have a deeper, more trusting relationship with. You know, I think they recognize that I'm someone they can tell anything to, that I'm interested in their problems, not just interested in telling them about how their kids should drink less juice, which they should. No one should be drinking juice.

Unless we show that we really care for people, they won't trust us and let us help them.