

EDUCATING, SUPPORTING & COORDINATING CARE: ONCOLOGY NURSE NAVIGATORS



Nancy Foreman, RN, BSN Oncology Nurse Navigator Cancer Centers of Northern Arizona Healthcare

- Learning Objectives:
- Identify five services included in an oncology nurse navigator role.
 - List four phases of care when oncology nurse navigators may interact With patients.

DISCLOSURE OF COMMERCIAL SUPPORT

Nancy Foreman, RN, BSN, does not have a significant financial interest or other relationship with manufacturer(s) of commercial product(s) and /or provider(s) of commercial services discussed in this presentation.

**ONCOLOGY NURSE
NAVIGATOR PROGRAM
AT
FLAGSTAFF MEDICAL CENTER**

Nancy Foreman RN, BSN, OCN

HISTORY OF PATIENT NAVIGATORS

- Harold P. Freeman M.D., a distinguished surgical oncologist and past president of ACS first presented the idea
- In 1990 he implemented the first patient navigation program at Harlem Hospital to serve marginalized communities.
- Goal was to expedite diagnostic and treatment services while facilitating access to care for individuals with abnormal breast screening results
- Found an improvement in survival in the navigated patients.

Current Navigation Use

- Oncology patient navigation has become a healthcare buzz word
- Organizations strive to streamline and optimize patient care and improve patient satisfaction.
- ACS and NCI have set guidelines for navigation and increasingly it is becoming a standard for certain accreditations
- There are currently more than 400 cancer programs in the U.S. with some form of patient navigation and more than 900 nurses are members of various Oncology Nurse Navigator organizations

WHAT IS AN ONCOLOGY NURSE NAVIGATOR?

- Uses her expert knowledge of the cancer experience to guide the patient through the various phases of the treatment process
- Starts with the initial diagnosis, thru surgery, into any further needed treatments and on to survivorship
- Provides patient and family education and psychosocial support while coordinating patient care and services across the treatment continuum
- Bridging gaps to care and ensuring that patients do not "fall through the cracks"

HOW WE CAN ASSIST

- For most patients, when they hear the initial word cancer, their minds shut down. They cannot hear anything beyond the diagnoses.
- The Nurse Navigator can meet with the patient and family after diagnoses and reinforce what the physician has discussed, giving written materials and needed support.
- The Oncology Nurse Navigator may identify and deal with various barriers to care such as lack of understanding, financial issues, transportation or housing, or perhaps emotional issues.

Coordination of Services

- The Oncology Nurse Navigator may make periodic phone calls, and be a contact resource for clarifying information, appointments and guiding the patient through the cancer continuum after surgery which often includes medical and radiation oncology
- The Oncology Nurse Navigator can also coordinate seamless transitions from the hospital to the outpatient setting by working on the necessary follow-up appointments, tests, and with logistics as needed

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- The patient is referred to the program by the physician.
- The ONN will meet with patient by phone or in person.
- An assessment is done to determine what the patient and family understand of the treatment plan and how best to meet their learning needs.
- Written education and resources are given to the patient as needed and verbal discussion as appropriate.
- Assistance with scheduling any needed appointments throughout the continuum of care.
- The ONN is a single point of contact for the patient as she travels through the health care system, offering ongoing education and support

Complimentary Services

- Support group
- Various Physical Therapy Modalities
- Sound Healing
- Reiki
- Social Worker Support
- Nutritional counseling
- Post Mastectomy camisole, prosthesis

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- According to satisfaction surveys, physicians and patients believe that navigation is beneficial, as well as for the hospital conducting the program. Some of the benefits include:
 - Improved coordination of high quality compassionate care
 - Improving the patient's quality of life
 - Patient education, empowerment and satisfaction
 - Physician satisfaction
 - Reduced time to optimum treatment initiation
 - Adherence to treatment with improved patient outcomes
 - Help decrease health care costs through appropriate utilization of healthcare resources
 - Increased referrals to community resources

CONCLUSION

Increasing numbers of cancer care programs striving for improvements in efficiency and adherence to quality care view the nurse navigator as a critical element for improved patient outcomes.

“No person with cancer should be forced to spend more time fighting their way through the health care system than fighting their disease”

(Freeman, 2002)
