Title: Elevating the Patient Experience: Spotlight on the Clinical Nurse Specialist as Patient Navigator

Category: Category II: Clinical Care, Treatments and Processing

Sub-Category: G. Innovative Nursing Roles

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Objectives

Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) are uniquely positioned to transform the delivery of care by providing clinical expertise through collaboration, scholarship and empowerment. The increasing complexity of healthcare requires innovative approaches aimed towards providing specialized, integrated and coordinated care. Leveraging off the advanced academic preparation of CNSs in the Patient Navigator role further enhances care and improves patient outcomes through evidenced-based practice in an interdisciplinary environment.

Methods

Looking at health care integration from the unique vantage of patients, our large community teaching hospital strategically prioritized implementation of an Integrated Care Collaborative Model (ICC) for Breast Cancer care. This nationally unique model implemented the role of the Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) as Patient Navigator with the goal of coordinating care across a complex and fragmented system to deliver value-based health care organized around each patient’s condition.

Results

The CNS/Navigator has a unique opportunity to combine clinical expertise, collaboration, consultation and education to positively influence patient outcomes and continuity of care. The Breast Cancer ICC anticipates 700 surgical cases annually with the CNS/Navigators having supported over 250 patients since June 2013. In addition to meeting the physical, emotional and psychosocial needs of these patients, CNS/navigators closed the gap by referring patients to allied health providers (32%) and community cancer agencies (21%); thus streamlining care within the organization and the community. Overall, CNS expertise, within a Patient Navigator context, has emerged as the common thread successfully promoting interdisciplinary team collaboration throughout the Breast Cancer ICC.

Conclusions

By connecting patients with timely and appropriate access to care, the CNS/Navigator helps to eliminate gaps within our health care system and improve patient satisfaction. The CNS/Navigator provides enhanced support to patients while continuously monitoring processes and researching new opportunities for enhancing care. In future, ICCs will focus on increased service integration with community partners and primary care providers; sustainability; and evaluative research of the ICC model's impact on patient experience. This presentation will summarize the initiative, explore benefits and challenges, and demonstrate the subsequent transformation of clinical practice.