**BACKGROUND**

New Commission on Cancer (CoC) accreditation standards require a patient navigation process, driven by a community needs assessment and focused on the reduction of cancer health disparities and barriers to care, to be phased in by 2015. The GW Cancer Institute (GWCI), in partnership with the GW Medical Faculty Associates and the GW Hospital, has built a comprehensive patient navigation service to assist patients across the cancer continuum. GWCI navigators have served over 750 patients in the last year.

GWCI leverages the expertise of its navigators and staff to share best practices in patient navigation and patient-centered care through its national Center for the Advancement of Cancer Survivorship, Navigation and Policy. GWCI also coordinates a Citywide Patient Navigation Network (CPNN) that has resolved 17,681 health care access barriers for 2,840 individuals in the last year. Top barriers were social/practical support, financial barriers, system problems with scheduling care and language barriers.

**METHODS**

GWCI navigators work together to resolve tough barriers to care. Three lay navigators work as a team with a nurse navigator, a cancer center social worker, and a survivorship navigator to assist patients across the cancer continuum. Navigators document their interactions through a tracking log that captures demographics and barriers to care as part of the larger CPNN.

Key steps to implementing the navigation program:
- Needs assessment, including patient needs assessment, institutional capacity assessment and community data.
- Implementation of the program in collaboration with clinical champions.
- Evaluation of the program to capture demographics, barriers and outcomes.

Flexibility, teamwork and communication have been critical.

**RESULTS**

In the past year, more than 750 individuals have been served by the GWCI team of navigators.

**Challenging case:** An 81 year old, Portuguese-speaking patient was diagnosed in 2012 with locally-advanced breast cancer with co-morbidities including hypertension, glaucoma, arthritis, back and limb pain, and a history of uterine cancer. Presenting to her primary care provider with nipple discharge, the patient was fast-tracked to obtain breast biopsy and surgical consultation the same day. The navigation team at GW resolved numerous barriers to care for this patient.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BARRIER</th>
<th>ADDRESSING THE NEED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language barrier</td>
<td>Interpretation services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-morbidities</td>
<td>Care coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Referral to free Survivorship Psychiatric Services</td>
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<td>Post-surgical complications</td>
<td>Referral and support to obtain</td>
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<td>Drainage care</td>
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<td>Post-mastectomy bra</td>
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<td>Physical therapy assistance</td>
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<td>Seroma aspiration</td>
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<td>Pain medication management</td>
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<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Metro Access</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-treatment supportive care</td>
<td>Insurance coverage for Home Health Aide to assist with Activities of Daily Living</td>
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**BEST PRACTICES**

The navigation team has identified the following best practices:
- Communication!
- Weekly team meetings to share cases.
- Open door policy to troubleshoot challenging cases.
- Sensitivity to time-pressure demands on all navigators.
- Knowing when to refer to other team members.
- Strong professional boundaries.
- Adhering to established scope of practice.

**NEXT STEPS**

In the year ahead, the team will:
- Develop a phone-based navigation assessment as a barriers screening tool.
- Pilot a navigation database to track common quality metrics, improve efficiency and demonstrate value of navigation program.
- Document a psychosocial triage plan and expand Distress Screening to meet CoC standard.
- Map the navigation process to find gaps in patient support and create strategies to address them.
- Pilot a transportation program to address ongoing transportation needs of patients.
- Deliver educational presentations to community health centers to improve accuracy of CPT codes and smooth referral process.

**FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Patient navigation through the GW Cancer Institute is funded by the American Cancer Society, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, The Avon Foundation for Women and through operational funding.

GWCI provides training on navigation skills and program development. Go to: [http://www.gwumc.edu/caSNP/education.html](http://www.gwumc.edu/caSNP/education.html).