AMCNO Participates in Evolution of Patient Navigation Program

Since its inception in 1990, the concept of patient navigation has evolved to include eliminating barriers to timely cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment and supportive care; addressing the timely movement of individuals across the entire healthcare continuum; and most recently connecting patients and families with health insurance.

Such significant evolution, in a short period of time, has raised many questions about the different types of patient navigators. To address these questions, The Northeast Ohio Patient Navigation Collaborative, spearheaded by The Center for Health Affairs and The Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio (AMCNO) hosted a panel discussion entitled, The Evolution of Patient Navigation. Presenters at the session provided an update on federal and state legislation related to patient navigation; clarified the difference between lay, clinical and insurance navigators, and shared the continued impact of patient navigation in Northeast Ohio.

Dr. George Topalsky provided opening remarks on behalf of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio (AMCNO). He noted that patient navigation is an important component of health care and the AMCNO is pleased to be a part of this initiative. It is important for physicians to work with a team of healthcare providers to enhance continuity of care and improve transitions of care. The AMCNO is committed to the patient navigation project working in tandem with the Center for Health Affairs (CHA) to provide information to the health care community about the patient navigation initiative.

Other presenters included: Natalie Joseph, MD, Surgical Oncologist, MetroHealth Medical Center with input from Patient Navigator, Natalie Williams Mary McLaughlin Davis, RN, ACNS-BC, CCM, Director of Case Management, Lakewood Hospital with input from Patient Navigator, Jessica Roberts Timia DelPrete-Brown, Ph.D, LPCC-S, Director, High Risk Care Management, CareSource with input from Patient Navigator, Christine Rihtar Ginny Pate, Community Health Navigator, Carmella Rose Health Foundation Panel Moderator: Carol Santalucia, Vice President, CHAMPS Patient Experience / Santalucia Group. Updates provided by Tony Gutowski, Public Policy Development Manager, The Center for Health Affairs, Sarah Hackenbracht, Executive Director, Cuyahoga Health Access Partnership.

Presenters provided background on HB 3, recent legislation passed in Ohio which outlines the role of navigators working in the health care marketplace. The navigators are to provide educational materials and consumer assistance and inform them about the plans that are part of the exchange. The audience also received an update on work being done by the Cuyahoga Health Access Project (CHAP). CHAP is operating under the Ohio Association of Foodbanks as a navigator in Ohio.

A panel discussion followed with presenters discussing their experiences with lay navigators in two area hospitals. The lay patient navigator works with patients who may not have resources such as the uninsured or underinsured to help guide them through the system and eliminate barriers to care. Their role is to support and enhance communications with the health care providers. Presentations were also provided by physicians who have worked with lay navigators which has resulted in reduced no-show and cancellation rates. In addition, the return on investment has already exceeded the costs of setting up the navigator program. Other members of the panel were from CareSource. CareSource has developed a navigator program for high-risk care management members and they provide guidance to high-risk patients and help coordinate care. They work to build a relationship with the member and their families and assist with appointments, transportation issues, reminder calls and determine if other resources are needed.

The AMCNO is pleased to be a part of the Northeast Ohio Patient Navigation Collaborative and we plan to continue to work with the CHA to provide additional information on this project to our members. ■