



WHAT ONTARIO HEALTH TEAMS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PATIENT NAVIGATION

Patient navigation is used to address fragmentation in the health care system, and to help patients overcome barriers to care and move through an often complex health care continuum.

- **WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT PATIENT NAVIGATION?** Patient care and experience, which includes the commitment to improve access, transitions, and coordination for patients, is one of the key building blocks of Ontario Health Teams. At maturity, OHTs are expected to offer patients, families and caregivers 24/7 coordination and system navigation services for patients who need them. This includes individualized care planning, care pathways, health literacy support, digital access to care information and shared decision making (as outlined in [RISE Brief 1: OHT Building Blocks - Building Block #4](#)).
- **HOW CAN NAVIGATION BE IMPLEMENTED AT YOUR WORKPLACE?** Navigation is an intervention that was initially developed to meet the cancer care needs of underserved populations in Harlem, NY. Today, many navigation jobs are still specific to a chronic condition (i.e. oncology, arthritis, mental health and addictions etc.) or patient population (i.e. ethno-cultural groups, individuals experiencing economic barriers, age groups, underserved groups).
- Navigation functions are often part of a regulated health professional's role. Patient navigators are also emerging as standalone jobs across Canada. Majority of the standalone 'navigators' job postings require a minimum bachelor's degree, with the programs of study mostly in nursing science, followed by social work, psychology, and occupational therapy.
- In literature, navigation programs in primary care are typically delivered by either (1) nursing professionals for patient populations with complex needs, (2) 'lay' navigators who are non-regulated health professionals for more stable populations to address social determinants of health, or (3) a team comprising of health professionals and 'lay' navigators.
- Literature and job posting show variation in the roles, responsibilities and qualifications of navigators. The most common responsibilities of navigators are to provide care facilitation and coordination, assist with appointment scheduling and other logistical support (i.e. transportation, health insurance etc.), assist with health literacy, provide patient education and psychosocial support, and to link patients and families to resources and services.
- Skills and knowledge navigators typically require include health education, problem-solving, conflict management, negotiation, effective communication, teamwork/collaboration, cultural competence/safety, case management, planning, time management etc.
- Patient navigation can be supported by technology, i.e. streamlined registration system, way-finding access tool, information access via apps etc. The navigation tools or systems should be service-oriented and clearly defined, using design principles to encourage uptake.

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This one-pager was prepared by the the Health Leadership and Learning Network at the Faculty of Health, York University. If your organization is interested in patient navigation training or implementation, please contact us at hlln@yorku.ca or 416.736.2100 x22170. Website: hlln.info.yorku.ca/patientnavigatorprofessional