

# GW Cancer Institute

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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**Core Competencies for Non-Clinically Licensed Patient Navigators**

**from**

**The George Washington University (GW) Cancer Institute**

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# Core Competencies for Non-Clinically Licensed Patient Navigators

## Background

The George Washington University (GW) Cancer Institute created core competencies for non-clinically licensed patient navigators using a highly collaborative, multi-stage process from January 2013 through August 2014. In 2013, we conducted a comprehensive literature and curriculum review and established a framework of functional areas for patient navigation reviewed by an external advisory panel. In 2014, we conducted focus groups with patient navigators across the U.S., worked with expert reviewers and conducted a national survey of health care professionals who self-identified as working in the field of oncology patient navigation to validate the competency statements. We adopted the common framework for health professional competencies supported by the Association of American Medical Colleges. The following 45 statements resulted from this 18 month study.

## Intended Use

These competencies can be used by health care professionals and institutions considering qualifications for patient navigators. Patient Navigation stakeholders may use the competencies as a guide for training and professional development with proper acknowledgement. The GW Cancer Institute is developing an online training funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention which will be available free of charge in late 2014 to build competence within the patient navigation workforce.

## Questions?

Contact the GW Cancer Institute's Center for the Advancement of Cancer Survivorship, Navigation and Policy at [casnp@gwu.edu](mailto:casnp@gwu.edu).

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## Core Competencies for Non-Clinically Licensed Patient Navigators

### *Domain 1: Patient Care*

Facilitate patient-centered care that is compassionate, appropriate and effective for the treatment of cancer and the promotion of health.

- 1.1 Assist patients in accessing cancer care and navigating health care systems. Assess barriers to care and engage patients and families in creating potential solutions to financial, practical and social challenges.
- 1.2 Identify appropriate and credible resources responsive to patient needs (practical, social, physical, emotional, spiritual) taking into consideration reading level, health literacy, culture, language and amount of information desired. For physical concerns, emotional needs or clinical information, refer to licensed clinicians.
- 1.3 Educate patients and caregivers on the multi-disciplinary nature of cancer treatment, the roles of team members and what to expect from the health care system. Provide patients and caregivers evidence-based information and refer to clinical staff to answer questions about clinical information, treatment choices and potential outcomes.
- 1.4 Empower patients to communicate their preferences and priorities for treatment to their health care team; facilitate shared decision making in the patient's health care.
- 1.5 Empower patients to participate in their wellness by providing self-management and health promotion resources and referrals.
- 1.6 Follow up with patients to support adherence to agreed-upon treatment plan through continued non-clinical barrier assessment and referrals to supportive resources in collaboration with the clinical team.

### *Domain 2: Knowledge for Practice*

Demonstrate basic understanding of cancer, health care systems and how patients access care and services across the cancer continuum to support and assist patients.

NOTE: This domain refers to foundational knowledge applied across other domains.

- 2.1 Demonstrate basic knowledge of medical and cancer terminology.
- 2.2 Demonstrate familiarity with and know how to access and reference evidence-based information regarding cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment and survivorship.
- 2.3 Demonstrate basic knowledge of cancer, cancer treatment and supportive care options, including

risks and benefits of clinical trials and integrative therapies.

2.4 Demonstrate basic knowledge of health system operations.

2.5 Identify potential physical, psychological, social and spiritual impacts of cancer and its treatment.

2.6 Demonstrate general understanding of health care payment structure, financing, and where to refer patients for answers regarding insurance coverage, and financial assistance.

### *Domain 3: Practice-Based Learning and Improvement*

Improve patient navigation process through continual self-evaluation and quality improvement.  
Promote and advance the profession.

3.1 Contribute to patient navigation program development, implementation and evaluation.

3.2 Use evaluation data (barriers to care, patient encounters, resource provision, population health disparities data and quality indicators) to collaboratively improve navigation process and participate in quality improvement.

3.3 Incorporate feedback on performance to improve daily work.

3.4 Use information technology to maximize efficiency of patient navigator's time.

3.5 Continually identify, analyze and use new knowledge to mitigate barriers to care.

3.6 Maintain comprehensive, timely and legible records capturing ongoing patient barriers, patient interactions, barrier resolution and other evaluation metrics and report data to show value to administrators and funders.

3.7 Promote navigation role, responsibilities and value to patients, providers and the larger community.

### *Domain 4: Interpersonal and Communication Skills*

Demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families and health professionals.

4.1 Assess patient capacity to self-advocate; Help patients optimize time with their doctors and treatment team (e.g. prioritize questions, clarify information with treatment team).

4.2 Communicate effectively with patients, families and the public to build trusting relationships across a broad range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

4.3 Employ active listening and remain solutions-oriented in interactions with patients, families and members of the health care team.

- 4.4 Encourage active communication between patients/families and health care providers to optimize patient outcomes.
- 4.5 Communicate effectively with navigator colleagues, health professionals and health related agencies to promote patient navigation services and leverage community resources to assist patients.
- 4.6 Demonstrate empathy, integrity, honesty and compassion in difficult conversations.
- 4.7 Know and support National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care to advance health equity, improve quality and reduce health disparities.
- 4.8 Apply insight and understanding about emotions and human responses to emotions to create and maintain positive interpersonal interactions.

### *Domain 5: Professionalism*

Demonstrate a commitment to carrying out professional responsibilities and an adherence to ethical principles.

- 5.1 Apply knowledge of the difference in roles between clinically licensed and non-licensed professionals and act within professional boundaries
- 5.2 Build trust by being accessible, accurate, supportive and acting within scope of practice.
- 5.3 Use organization, time management, problem-solving and critical thinking to assist patients efficiently and effectively.
- 5.4 Demonstrate responsiveness to patient needs within scope of practice and professional boundaries.
- 5.5 Know and support patient rights.
- 5.6 Demonstrate sensitivity and responsiveness to a diverse patient population, including but not limited to diversity in gender, age, culture, race, religion, abilities and sexual orientation.
- 5.7 Demonstrate a commitment to ethical principles pertaining to confidentiality, informed consent, business practices and compliance with relevant laws, policies and regulations (e.g. HIPAA, agency abuse reporting rules, Duty to Warn, safety contracting).
- 5.8 Perform administrative duties accurately and efficiently.

### *Domain 6: Systems-Based Practice*

Demonstrate an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger context and system of health care, as well as the ability to call effectively on other resources in the system to provide optimal health care.

6.1 Support a smooth transition of patients across screening, diagnosis, active treatment, survivorship and/or end-of-life care, working with the patient's clinical care team.

6.2 Advocate for quality patient care and optimal patient care systems.

6.3 Organize and prioritize resources to optimize access to care across the cancer continuum for the most vulnerable patients.

### *Domain 7: Interprofessional Collaboration*

Demonstrate ability to engage in an interprofessional team in a manner that optimizes safe, effective patient- and population-centered care.

7.1 Work with other health professionals to establish and maintain a climate of mutual respect, dignity, diversity, ethical integrity and trust.

7.2 Use knowledge of one's role and the roles of other health professionals to appropriately assess and address the needs of patients and populations served to optimize health and wellness.

7.3 Participate in interprofessional teams to provide patient- and population-centered care that is safe, timely, efficient, effective and equitable.

### *Domain 8: Personal and Professional Development*

Demonstrate qualities required to sustain lifelong personal and professional growth.

8.1 Set learning and improvement goals. Identify and perform learning activities that address one's gaps in knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities.

8.2 Demonstrate healthy coping mechanisms to respond to stress; employ self-care strategies.

8.3 Manage possible and actual conflicts between personal and professional responsibilities.

8.4 Recognize that ambiguity is part of patient care and respond by utilizing appropriate resources in dealing with uncertainty.