Developing a Student-Led Patient Navigator Program for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

Garrett Ray, Cameron Ward, Nicholas Campalans, Umaru Barrie, Thanos Rassopoulos, Alison Liu, MPH, Natalie Bonner, MS, Brayden Seal, Claire Abijay, Arlen Suarez, Ashlyn Lafferty, Kyle Swartz, Nora Gimpel, MD, Philip Day, PhD, Patti Pagels, MPAS, PA

Context

Patient Navigation & Medical Education
- Patient navigation improves health outcomes for those with chronic illnesses experiencing homelessness
- Patient navigation as a healthcare trainee promotes self-identification as a change agent
- Opportunities for student engagement in patient navigation for people experiencing homelessness are limited

Methods: Patient Navigator Program (PNP) Development

October – December 2019
- Initial stakeholder engagement: Union Gospel Mission, Dallas County Department of Health and Human Services
- Needs identification: Patient navigation services for people experiencing homelessness
- Mission statement: Improve access to resources and health outcomes for homeless population
- Inspire interprofessional collaboration and desire to care for underserved populations

January – December 2020
- Organizational planning and leadership recruitment
- Concurrent development of curriculum, navigation system, resource, and research components
- Pilot program development, creation of marketing and communications component
- Additional institutional and community stakeholder engagement
- Pilot program and enrichment elective launched

Results: Programmatic Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Subcomponent &amp; Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Provides foundational educational and training experiences for future navigators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigation System</td>
<td>Continuous Care System (CCS): Provides longitudinal navigation services:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15-week cycles of engagement per navigator team: 3 clients per year per team, 8 teams,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>planned capacity for 24 clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standardized Care System (SCS): Enables as-needed navigation for clients presenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with acute needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Notion Resource Database: Searchable database of navigation-related sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Navigator Handbook: Guide for navigators on best practices for linking clients to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Quality</td>
<td>Learner Survey: Tracks changes in learner knowledge &amp; attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Client Survey: Tracks client outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality Improvement: Measures and tracks internal processes for systems improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and</td>
<td>Grants and Funding: Identifies institutional and outside sources of funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Social Media &amp; Website: Promotes student, stakeholder, and public engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Navigator Fellowship Model

Enrichment Elective
- Format: 72-hour sessions over 3 months. Cross-disciplinary lectures.
- Content: Specific to barriers and resources relevant to homeless population in Dallas County
- Final group project: Develop/improve tool or process related to patient navigation

PNP Fellowship
- Student navigators serve on teams of 4-6 for 1 year
- Responsibilities
  - CCS: Identify and assist client in meeting 6 health-based objectives
  - SCS: Assist urgent client needs on call weeks
- Time Commitment
  - 1.5 hours a week per team
  - 1-hour monthly debriefings

Student Engagement Outcomes
- 48 students enrolled in enrichment elective
- Approximately 18% of first year medical students at UT Southwestern Medical Center
- 43 PNP Fellows accepted in first cohort

Conclusion

Strengths and Successes
- 43 fellows trained and currently providing navigation services to 6 CCS clients
- Co-development quality improvement with system design
- Engaging existing navigation programs at other institutions proved valuable
- Over $15,000 secured in non-institutional funding for program
- Piloting of the SCS program in Spring 2021

Challenges and Insights
- COVID-19 complicates accessibility of client resources
- Need to accommodate to institutional regulations, e.g. Phase 2 COVID-19 restrictions prevented piloting of SCS in Fall 2020
- Student led program paired with variables schedules require redundant leadership structures

Future Directions
- Develop capacity to meet needs of Spanish speaking homeless population in Dallas County
- Assess impact of navigation on use of emergency and non-emergency healthcare services
- Assess impact of navigation on client quality of life
- Develop replicable model for implementation of student-led patient navigation program at other institutions

Acknowledgements
- Union Gospel Mission
- UT Southwestern Department of Family Medicine
- Philip Huang, MD, MPH, Director of Dallas County Health and Human Services