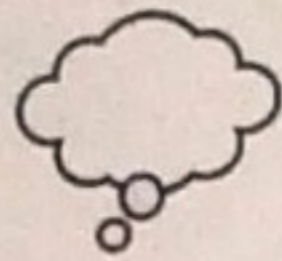


Patient Navigator

for people diagnosed with diverse sex development conditions

What is a patient navigator?



Initially developed in the field of Cancer (Freeman et al, 1989), a patient navigator is a person whose job it is to improve health care experiences by reducing the barriers to quality care (Freeman et al, 2004).

Our health care systems can be very complicated these days. A number of health professionals from different clinical disciplines may offer care to a patient. Some patients need to see health professionals located in different departments or buildings. Furthermore, medical investigations and treatments and their timings can be hard to understand. Patients may not fully appreciate who they should see, what they are having done and why, and how to contact the right person or service when they are worried about any aspect of their health care, or when things don't go to plan. In being a single point of contact, a patient navigator who knows the system can be very helpful to some patients with complex health conditions and health care needs.

There are currently over 20 patient navigation training programmes in the USA for hospital staff (i.e. nurses) and laypeople (i.e. fellow patients). Patient navigators can work in different areas, for example they may be based in the community or at a hospital. They guide patients through the healthcare system. They can also help the healthcare team to be more aware of all the factors affecting the care quality and patient experience.

What does a patient navigator do?



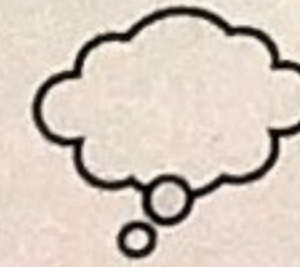
Patient navigator can:

- Reassure patients who are worried about their health condition or health care arrangements
- Help patients with communication difficulties



- Offer advise on financial matters or transportation
- Facilitate the weighing up of care options so that the patients can come to the right decision for themselves
- Be a coordinator for healthcare team

Can a patient navigator really benefit patients?



Research on the benefits of a patient navigator has mainly been in the field of Cancer, so we are not sure how it would work in other areas of health care, such as conditions associated with diverse sex development (DSD).

Navigation can be valuable in terms of emotional support and care coordination. It seems to improve patient experience (Thygesen et al, 2011). When researchers assesses how distressed patients are, patients who has the assistance of a navigator seem to be less distressed than patients who are not provided with the service (Swanson and Koch, 2010).

For the time being, much more research is needed in order to assess its value before it can become the norm for services for DSD conditions.

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