

25th Global Meet on
CANCER RESEARCH & ONCOLOGY
&
World Congress on
PRIMARY HEALTHCARE AND MEDICARE SUMMIT

May 20-21, 2019 | Rome, Italy

The process of oncology nurse practitioner patient navigation: A grounded theory approach

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Introduction: Nurse practitioner (NP) navigation, in general, has been shown to achieve cost effective quality care, while saving millions of dollars. Research though scant has shown that oncology nurse practitioner navigators' improve clinical outcomes. For purposes of this study, oncology NP (ONP) navigators are nurse practitioners with a certification in oncology who utilize navigation processes to care for cancer patients along any aspect of the cancer care continuum. Navigation process is defined as a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end.

Method: Twenty ONP navigators were interviewed through the use of a semi-structured interview utilizing grounded theory methodology.

Results: This resulted in a well-defined set of concepts and theoretical framework for the process of ONP navigation which lays the groundwork for program evaluation and role delineation.

Conclusions: A navigation process has been identified for ONP navigators. Researchers have concluded that an understanding of the structure and process requirements for planning a care innovation is the basis for safe and effective patient care. Implications for further research would center upon further defining the categories of this navigation process for program. Oncology related triage tools are of crucial importance as the best of care plans can be thwarted by an inept triage process. Additionally, research has indicated a need to define the value of the NP role in terms of delivering patient outcomes (Grainne, Plummer, O'Brien, & Boyd, 2011). Identification of standardized outcome measures will serve to promote interprofessional collaboration on a global basis. The findings indicate that not all of the participants guided the patient entirely through the cancer. This definition of navigation processes can serve to promote clarification of the navigation role, and serve as the basis for nurse practitioner training and development. Finally the basic social process that centered on the core category was staying connected to the patient and to the system.

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