

Patient Navigation: A Call to Action

by Virginia T. Vaitones, MSW, OSW-C

Central to ACCC's mission is ensuring timely patient access to appropriate cancer care. Over the past decade, patient navigation services have been emerging as an important strategy for enhancing patient access to the full continuum of cancer care from screening to detection, diagnosis, treatment, and beyond.

ACCC's Patient Navigation: A Call to Action project is designed to help community cancer programs establish or expand patient navigation services. Included in this supplement is the newly developed Patient Navigation guideline from ACCC's *Cancer Program Guidelines*. To view ACCC's full *Cancer Program Guidelines* go to www.accc-cancer.org.

This supplement is not designed as a "how to" guide. It is a resource for community cancer programs interested in implementing or expanding patient navigation services. We've included articles describing five model patient navigation efforts currently underway at ACCC member programs. The range in program design and scope demonstrates that there is no one-size-fits-all template for patient navigation programs. Rather, these services can be designed to dovetail with your program's specific resources, community needs, and strategic objectives.

Included are sample tools from successful navigation programs, such as pre-assessment forms, intake summaries and referral forms, navigation tracking forms and progress notes, patient satisfaction surveys, and outcomes measures.

And, we've included an interview with Dr. Harold Freeman, who in 1990 first conceived and developed a patient navigator service to help underserved populations access the healthcare system. Dr. Freeman talks about what he believes is essential to any patient navigation program. He also describes the Harold P. Freeman Patient Navigation Institute, founded in 2008, to help define patient navigation, create standards, and develop a certification process for people who were trained in the patient navigation program concept.

As the model programs in this supplement demonstrate, patient navigation in community cancer centers can be tailored to meet the unique needs of the community, patients, and caregivers. Patient navigation services can streamline patient access to care, enhance quality care, and increase both patient and provider satisfaction.

With more than 30 years of experience as an oncology social worker, Virginia T. Vaitones, MSW, OSW-C, has also been an active participant and supporter of ACCC, serving on the Association's Board of Trustees, and ACCC's Program, Guidelines, and Patient Advocacy Committees.

