
**SUCCESS STORIES FROM
PATIENT NAVIGATORS,
COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS,
AND COMMUNITY-BASED
ORGANIZATIONS**

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“A patient was referred by their provider for mammography. When they arrived at the health center on van day, they told our patient navigator that they had been terrified to have a mammogram all their adult life. The patient, well into their 60’s was coming for their first mammogram. The patient was very anxious about being diagnosed with cancer and fearful that the test would be very painful. Our navigator reassured the patient that the mammography van staff would be very kind and supportive, while also notifying the van staff that the patient was very anxious and needed support. The patient had the mammogram without any problem, however, due to the results, the patient needed to have follow up diagnostic imaging. The patient was very alarmed, very anxious and wanted to get the follow up right away. Our navigator and breast health case manager called four hospitals to get an appointment the next day. Thankfully, the diagnostic mammogram was normal. The navigator received a call from the patient thanking us for all our efforts. The patient said that they felt that well cared for and was so grateful to be a patient at our health center. The funding makes it possible for our team to help women in need of breast and cervical screening and care.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“After doing an education session that included the HPV vaccine at a Mosque, two moms told me they had no idea what it was and refused it for their daughters at their annual physical appointments but want to go back and ask that their children be vaccinated. A third said her son’s annual physical is coming up soon and she will ask his doctor for it.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“A patient found a lump in her breast while performing a self-breast examination. She was very distraught as she did not have insurance and was restricted from flying to her country due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The patient’s daughter reached out to a friend who knew of the Women’s health Network program and referred her to me. When I received the call, I immediately reached out to our Health Navigators who quickly began the application process for insurance while I reached out to a local health center to schedule the patients diagnostic screening. I created a patient chart while working simultaneously with our Front Desk Coordinators who were able to assign the patient a Provider that very day. The patient and daughter came to our health center the very next day to complete the insurance application, I was delighted to finally meet the two due to the nature of the situation, and the many conversations held between us. Unfortunately, the patient was diagnosed with cancer. My contact with the family remained consistent, which patient and patient’s daughter verbally expressed many times of how much they appreciate the support during their time of need. This story sticks out to me because this family was in a very unique situation where stress and anxiety is at an all-time high, as fear can set in, to the point that a patient chooses to refuse treatment. This was a true moment of patient navigation and support as a community health worker at its finest. I’m glad I was given the opportunity to show a family how valuable Community Health Workers are in the Public Health and in our health center.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“My table at our employee wellness fair was well attended. Folks stopped by with their interest and questions, and I could sense from all the laughter and openness that the conversations were empowering and enlightening for them. One staff member, known to me for over a decade and now in her 50s, looked quite chagrined when asked about the status of her breast cancer screenings. She admitted that her doctor “yells” at her every year about it. She knows the importance. I assured her that the Women’s Health Network would support her in addressing the barrier keeping her from taking care of her. She accepted; She enrolled to encourage herself to go for her first mammogram.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“Our navigator has helped thousands of women to get mammography screening over the years. She is passionate about breast health and devoted to reducing barriers to care for our patients. We had a patient who was very overdue for a screening mammogram and our navigator saw them leaving the clinic on a day that the van was at the health center. The navigator urged the patient to stay and get the screen. The patient said they were diabetic and needed to go home to eat, as they had no money to buy any food. Our navigator bought the patient a sandwich and worked the patient into the van schedule. The patient stayed and had their mammogram screen. The patient thanked our navigator profusely for their help and generosity. Our navigator has always been willing to go the extra mile to help patients in any way possible with insurance issues, scheduling logistics and sheer perseverance for checking back to see if patients are ready to schedule.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“I had been attempting to reach a patient who was hearing impaired and was able to communicate by text messages and schedule a home visit to discuss WHN and provided patient education in regard to screening. I completed a home visit and was able to successfully enroll patient into WHN using an iPad to communicate. I was able to schedule screening appointments and leave her with appointment details before completing home visit. Appointment reminders for the patient were provided by mail and text. She was able to receive her mammogram screening and now is up to date with her exams.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“We had a female patient with an abnormal pap in March 2020. Thereafter, pandemic hit which limited office visit. Her colposcopy appointments had to cancel reschedule many times. However, the biggest concern for the patient that she was afraid to go in the medical facility. We were determined to get a hold of this patient to be able to schedule for her follow up appointment. After a week, there still no return calls from this patient. Finally, we were able to speak with her husband and he provide patient’s new telephone number. The patient finally reached and her colposcopy booked. On the call, we walked the patient through clinic covid safety protocols to make sure she feel comfortable and address any barriers for her to keep this appointment. After 9 outreach attempts and the determination /not given up from our community health workers and patient navigators, the patient completed her colposcopy.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“During the month of April 2021, I had much opportunity to get out into the community for direct outreach. I am proud that several who visited my tables stated that they wanted to share the information with others. One took our “Get Screened” magnet and mentioned that she planned to put it up at work. Another woman explained that she owned a home daycare serving minority families; she took brochures to share and my card when I offered to do a health presentation for her clients.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“In reviewing the patient’s chart for outreach to patients who are due for cervical and breast cancer screening, our Arabic patient navigator noticed a patient that was due for a mammogram who had also refused to have her pap which offer by her provider. When the navigator reached patient to provide women’s health education and explain about the benefit of mam and pap screening, the patient agreed to schedule a mam, but hesitated to schedule a pap. The PN explored the issue further and learned their provider was male. The navigator was then able to offer to schedule a pap appointment with a female provider, something the patient did not know was possible. For that reason, she was so pleased and comfortable to have her pap appointment scheduled with a female provider and with Arabic interpreter. She appreciated having staff who understood her culture to help her navigate the system.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“I recently gave a women's health presentation at my place of employment, to which a fellow staff member brought some of her clients. The staff member seemed happy and eager to have me speak to and educate the clients toward being their best health advocates. My colleague sat-in on the presentation and began to participate becoming more and more engaged herself. Following my presentation, she enrolled; explaining that she hadn't had her recommended, annual mammogram in years now. She had moved several months ago from another state and had yet to establish connections with local medical providers. We were able to refer her to a WHN affiliated clinic for her needs.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“When reviewing patient charts for cervical and breast cancer screening, I found a Cambodian patient due for screening that is a cancer survivor. As I am the only staff who can speak Cambodian language, I was able to reach her about scheduling an appointment, as well as offer to provide interpretation for her medical appointment. After talking with her I learned that she had never had a mammogram before. I went over the breast cancer screening benefits and walk her through the process. To make it easy for patient, I was able to work with our Radiology Department to have her mam and pap scheduled on the same day and was able to provide interpretation, comfort her anxiety, and overcome the fear. She told me that she has been blessed and appreciated everything I have done for her.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“At one of our women's health outreach and awareness event, a fellow agency employee walked in to talk to me. She had previously attended our in-service training on breast (and cervical) cancer awareness. She wanted to know how she could get a mammogram immediately, explaining that it was difficult to take time from work. I learned from her that it had been years since she was screened, even with previous abnormal results. Her primary care physician had been switched and her follow-up care was lost. I prioritized the patient, who was standing before me with such valid self-concern and advocacy. I feared that if she could not get in for screening during her preferred time, she may again get discouraged and return to simply waiting. After getting all the needed information for enrollment into WHN, I made an immediate referral call to our screening entity. Two weeks later, the patient saw me at our agency and stopped me to share the news: She got her screening! She appeared happy, excited and stated her gratitude.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

“We had a patient who had an abnormal breast findings since October 2018 and declined follow up testing. Her PCP provided education about the risk and benefit of further testing or interventions, but the patient continued to decline the recommended tests in 2019. In 2020, she agreed to schedule diagnostic appointments on multiple occasions, but did not show up each time. Our patient navigators continued to reach out, educate, assess barriers, and build trust with the patient and in July 2021, the patient successfully completed follow-up diagnostic testing.”

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

Clinical organizations can identify women in the community that are in need of screening but reaching them and successfully completing breast and cervical screenings has been a challenge. Partnering clinical health centers with community-based organizations (CBOs) that have strong ties to vulnerable and at-risk populations to overcome barriers was proposed. The Women's Health Network (WHN) works with Community Health Centers and CBOs to provide a comprehensive approach to assure appropriate breast and cervical cancer screening. The Health Centers serve specific populations including, Asian, foreign-born Muslim, Black, and Low Primary provider areas of the Commonwealth. CBO subcontractors of these centers provide outreach, education and patient navigation services to assure linkage to their clinical partner

Between July 2018 and October of 2019, nearly 300 educational events about breast and cervical health took place across 8 CBOs partnered with WHN programs. CBO staff additionally reported one-on-one discussions with 463 women about scheduling screenings. Of these women, 120 were due for screening(s) and were program eligible to enroll in the WHN program. For 32 of these women, the screening facilitated by community staff was their very first pap and/or mammogram.

All clinics and community organizations meet quarterly and provided a space to discuss common challenges and even collaborate, hosting joint events when locations or focus groups in the community overlapped. Non-traditional approaches to education and outreach have allowed for a wider reach into the community. Regardless of clinical-community linkage structure, the most successful stories come from strong partnerships that have been developed over time.

CDC Success Story, 2019

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

Identifying vulnerable and at-risk women in need of cancer screening has long been a challenge in reducing disparities in health. During COVID 19 these challenges are compounded by changes in safety protocols and the closure of screening services in healthcare facilities and stresses on the community resulting in changes to daily living and fear of the unknown. Patient navigation is a patient-centric healthcare service aimed at bridging gaps in disparities and early cancer detection for underserved populations. The focus of navigation is to promote the timely movement of an individual patient through an often-complex healthcare continuum. Services include the facilitation of access to services and elimination of barriers.

Navigation contacts declined significantly in March through May of 2020 as health facilities began closing their doors and prioritizing diagnostic and critical cases to help limit potential exposure to COVID-19. Access to medical record information and scheduling was also limited, however, navigators remained in contact with enrolled patients to facilitate rescheduling of appointments, address Covid-19 exposure concerns and eliminate any barriers to screening resulting in a gradual increase in completed screenings and scheduling of new patients.

By July 2020 , navigation contacts returned to pre-Covid levels. By July, breast screenings had returned to pre-Covid levels. Cervical screenings have slowly increased since May and continue to trend upward. Barrier assessments are included in the enrollment process for all women in the WHN program. Addressing Covid 19 as a barrier to care has helped in reducing anxiety surrounding in-person appointments.

CDC Success Story, 2020
