

# Volunteer Patient Navigator Program Flier



## Lay Patient Navigation Program

**A UNC Volunteer Services program designed to complement our cancer care team. Working with the Nurse Navigator and Clinic Nurses, lay patient navigators are trained to be an additional layer of non-clinical support for cancer patients and caregivers.**

**\*Many of the volunteers are teachers, nurses, social workers, retired professionals, cancer survivors and caregivers.**

What is a lay patient navigator? A member of our UNC Volunteer Services team who has received special training to provide non-clinical support and information to patients and caregivers who may be facing a cancer diagnosis.

Our goals:

- Provide information about hospital support services and community resources
- Offer emotional support to patients and their caregivers
- Inform and guide patients and caregivers throughout the UNC health system

Our lay patient navigators do not provide medical care, medical advice, psychotherapy or interfere with the doctor/patient relationship.

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## Heels of Hope Lay Volunteer Patient Navigation Program Increasing Cancer Support for Patients at the NC Cancer Hospital

Patient navigation had its inception by Dr. Harold Freeman, in Harlem in 1990 as an intervention designed to diminish the high breast cancer mortality rate in a population of poor African American women. The combined interventions of breast cancer screening and navigation from the point of abnormal finding to timely treatment increased the five-year survival rate from 39% to 70% with the utilization of trained lay patient navigators from the community (Freeman, 2005).

According to the UNC Cancer Registry, the NC Cancer Hospital has over 135,000 patient visits each year. The Heels of Hope Lay Patient Navigation Model was developed in 2013, partnering with the UNC Volunteer Services and the Patient and Family Advisory Board. It was our goal to increase support for all patients by developing a model of patient navigation that provides a well-defined training and orientation program for volunteers. This model was integrated into the existing model of cancer care delivery with ongoing direction and supervision from the oncology nurse. Building on the Oncology Nursing Society's position statement that states, "Navigation services can be delegated to trained nonprofessionals and/or volunteers and should be supervised by nurses or social workers" (ONS, 2010), volunteer lay patient navigators are able to:

- Communicate with patients in a manner that is supportive and respectful
- Provide emotional support within comfortable boundaries for both volunteers and patients
- Identify non-medical barriers to care which may include: fear; lack of transportation; financial difficulties; limited social support, anxiety, depression and low health literacy and a lack of awareness of existing cancer support programs and resources
- Link patients to internal and community resources to help overcome their non-medical barriers to care.

Lay patient navigators are now becoming part of the cancer team with ongoing supervision and support provided by the staff nurses, charge nurse, nurse navigators, chaplains and UNC volunteer program coordinator. A cancer diagnosis can be a devastating experience. We believe that patient navigation is one way to systematically address the fragmented health care system while supporting patients and families emotionally during a difficult time.

Freeman & Rodrigues, (2011). History and principles of patient navigation. *Cancer*, 117 (Suppl.15), 3539-3542

Oncology Nursing Society, Association of Oncology Social Work & National Association of Social Workers joint position statement on the role of the oncology nursing and oncology social work in patient navigation (2010).