

The UMass Worcester Prevention Research Center, located at UMass Medical School in Worcester, MA, is a member of the CDC's Prevention Research Center (PRC) network. Our work promotes healthy lifestyles through increased opportunities for physical activity, healthy eating and healthy weight. For more information, visit: www.umassmed.edu/prc
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Overview

Patient Navigators are trained lay health care workers who help patients access and use health care services. As they often reside in the same communities as patients and share similar characteristics such as languages, culture, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, they can foster rapport and trust with patients. Health care systems are increasingly using Patient Navigators to reach diverse patients who are often hard to reach.



Research Question

How helpful is a Patient Navigator Program for facilitating scheduling of primary care appointments?

Study

Initiated in 2009, the Patient Navigation program contacted patients with type 2 diabetes and/or hypertension who had not been seen by a primary care provider (PCP) in the previous six months. Three Patient Navigators called patients by phone to schedule an appointment with their Primary Care Provider (PCP) or chronic disease nurse (CDN). During the call, they built rapport, discussed the recommendations for follow up care, assessed a need for specialist referrals, identified challenges to health care access, and provided assistance to overcoming these challenges.

The Bottom Line

Personalized, direct telephone calls with patients can help patients seek care with a primary health care provider.

Spotlight on Results

- A total of 215 patients had 1 or more call attempts from Patient Navigators. Of these, 74 were additionally contacted via mailed letters or at the time of a CHC visit.
- Among the 45 patients reached, 77.8% scheduled an appointment through the Patient Navigator.
- 90% of patients reached by Patient Navigators visited their primary care provider within 6 months compared to 42.2% ($p < 0.0001$) of patients who were not reached.

Call for Action

Patient Navigator programs can help patients to re-engage in recommended primary care. Additional studies, including randomized controlled trials, are needed to evaluate efficacy of Patient Navigator programs on patient engagement in chronic disease management.

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Source

Wang ML, Gallivan L, Lemon LC, Borg A, Ramirez J, Figueroa B, McGuire M, Rosal MC. Navigating to health: Evaluation of a community health center patient navigation program. *Preventive Medicine Reports*. Available online 13 August 2015 Volume 2, 2015, Pages 664–668.