Patient Navigator
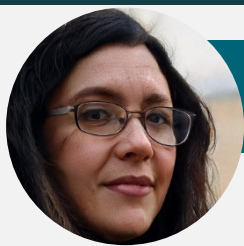# Alice Hougen

"Working directly with our patients allows me to offer hope. I am grateful that what we do is so impactful to the lives of our patients and their families."

Bio

Alice came to her role as a Patient Navigator after her sister was diagnosed with breast cancer and received invaluable logistical support from a hospital patient navigator. Alice applied skills from a previous non-profit role first as a navigator volunteer. Alice is now one of the most senior patient navigators in her hospital system.

Alice helps patients to overcome barriers to accessing health care services. She serves as a resource and advocate for patients, their families, and caregivers, while they are going through the journey of diagnosis and treatment. She is always moving between the hospital, clinics, office, and patient appointments. At times she even drives patients to treatment.

Alice acts as the communication bridge between practitioners and patients, ensuring that patients know what to expect from the healthcare system. She partners with nursing to ensure her patients have complete understanding of their diagnosis and plan of care. She provides evidence-based, credible, and appropriate resources tailored to patient needs (practical, emotional, physical, social, spiritual) and carefully considers reading level, health literacy, culture, language, and the amount of information desired.

Education: BA, Social Justice
Years of experience: 10
Work location: Have laptop, will travel

Goals

- To offer health education and free screenings for the uninsured
- Improve health outcomes for underserved populations
- Facilitate shared decision-making in the patient's healthcare through empowerment

Software attitude & use

- Open to new tools
- Uses her laptop/mobile phone to clarify instructions, confirm visits, and take notes during appointments
- Bibliographic resources: PubMed Central and Google Scholar
- Research and data: EHRs, patient forms, case management systems, spreadsheets to track survey data and for measurement planning, program sign-in sheets for demographics,
- Statistical software: SAS for basic descriptive or inferential statistics
- Online surveys: Survey Monkey
- General: MS Office, Google Suites

Scholarly Outputs

- Posters and presentations at AONN conferences
- Grant reviewer for clinical and late stage translational studies

Pain Points

- Stress: difficulty separating herself from work, accepting her limitations
- The assertiveness/patience balance with both patients and healthcare systems
- Challenges dealing with third parties, like insurance companies
- Feels that data collection sometimes impedes her patient care

Motivators

To "bridge the divide between a patient's home life and medical care"

Instilling confidence in patients and knowing her work made the difference in a patient taking their medication, or making it to an appointment

To decrease a patient's stress about the logistics of care coordination

Wants/Needs

- To incorporate the patient reported outcomes into trial design
- New educational apps, materials, websites for her patients
- A way to know the best evidence-based tools for patients, accessible on different devices
- Easier ways to log encounters, track outcomes with patients
- Technology to link research organizations to navigators
- Technology to help identify patients who may need patient navigation
- To work with administrators and IT to understand the value of patient navigator data to build better systems. Alice and other navigators can advise on the design

Professional Development

Working towards becoming a certified Oncology Navigator through the Academy of Nurse and Patient Navigators (AONN)

Would like to be more adept in SAS or R

Mentors patient navigators with less experience

Wants to become fluent in Spanish to better serve patients but needs time to navigate hospital tuition reimbursement benefits