

Community Based Cancer Screening Navigation Program Overcomes Barriers

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BACKGROUND

The Northeast Regional Cancer Institute Community Based Cancer Screening Navigation Program focuses on outreach, barrier reduction, and cancer screening navigation for low income residents in northeast Pennsylvania, **(See figure 1)** facilitating colon, breast and cervical cancer screening while establishing and re-establishing medical homes for the targeted population. Despite evidence that regular cancer screenings can save lives and reduce healthcare costs, there are numerous barriers to obtaining screenings for many residents of our region that include but also go beyond lack of adequate health insurance. The chosen target screenings are widely recommended, successful in detecting and preventing cancer, offer statistically reliable cost effectiveness yet remain underutilized regionally.

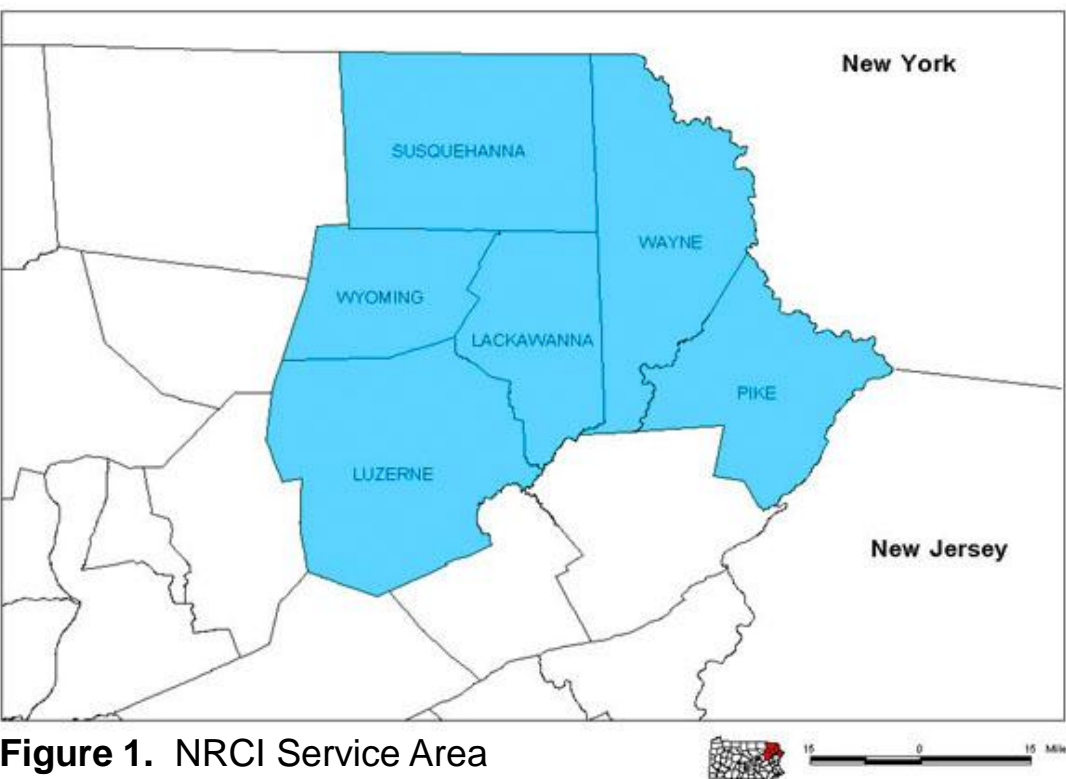


Figure 1. NRCI Service Area

OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Reduce barriers to screening by pairing individuals with trained navigators to address socio-economic, psycho-social, financial, and logistical concerns of the patient.

Objective: A minimum of 2,000 client contacts are made annually.

Goal 2: Facilitate coverage for screenings and diagnostic procedures by accessing public/private funds, charitable care, or Institute funds.

Objective: Complete a minimum of 500 breast, cervical and/or colon cancer screenings annually.

Goal 3: Establish or re-establish the relationship with a Medical Home for all participants.

Objective: Connect 100% of program participants to a medical home annually.

METHODS

In 2010, the need to provide assistance to the low income population of the region led the Cancer Institute to begin its Cancer Screening Navigation Program to increase screening compliance. Many navigation programs begin at diagnosis and operate within a closed health system. The Cancer Institute program begins with screening and is a community based program operating across healthcare systems, free-standing clinics, and public and private agencies.

The target population for screening includes:

- women age 21 and older for cervical cancer;
- women age 40 and older for breast cancer; and
- both men and women age 50 and older for colon cancer screenings and follow up.

To gain access to the individuals meeting these parameters, formal partnerships were established with the free/sliding scale community healthcare centers that serve these patients. Individual Business Associate Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding were developed, reviewed, approved and signed by the legal representatives of the centers.

Institute navigators provide individualized assistance to clients to overcome barriers and facilitate timely access to cancer screening. This support extends from screening through diagnosis, treatment and aftercare if needed. The process includes:

- providing one-on-one education about the benefits of screening and preventative care;
- identifying barriers to screening;
- providing information on access to insurance coverage and available financial resources;
- ensuring that all navigation participants are connected with a medical home;
- negotiating for free or reduced cost care;
- coordinating appropriate diagnostic procedure(s) for screened patients with suspicious findings;
- providing direct payment for screenings/diagnostic follow up where needed;
- coordinating with practices, agencies and organizations to address social and/or economic issues, such as transportation, child care, or other obstacles to cancer screening/care; and
- coordinating post treatment follow up.

Patients are referred to the Cancer Screening Navigation Program from health care centers, private physician practices, human service organizations and through self referral in response to our public service announcements. Once referrals are received the Navigation Assistants begin the contact protocol. **(See figure 2)**

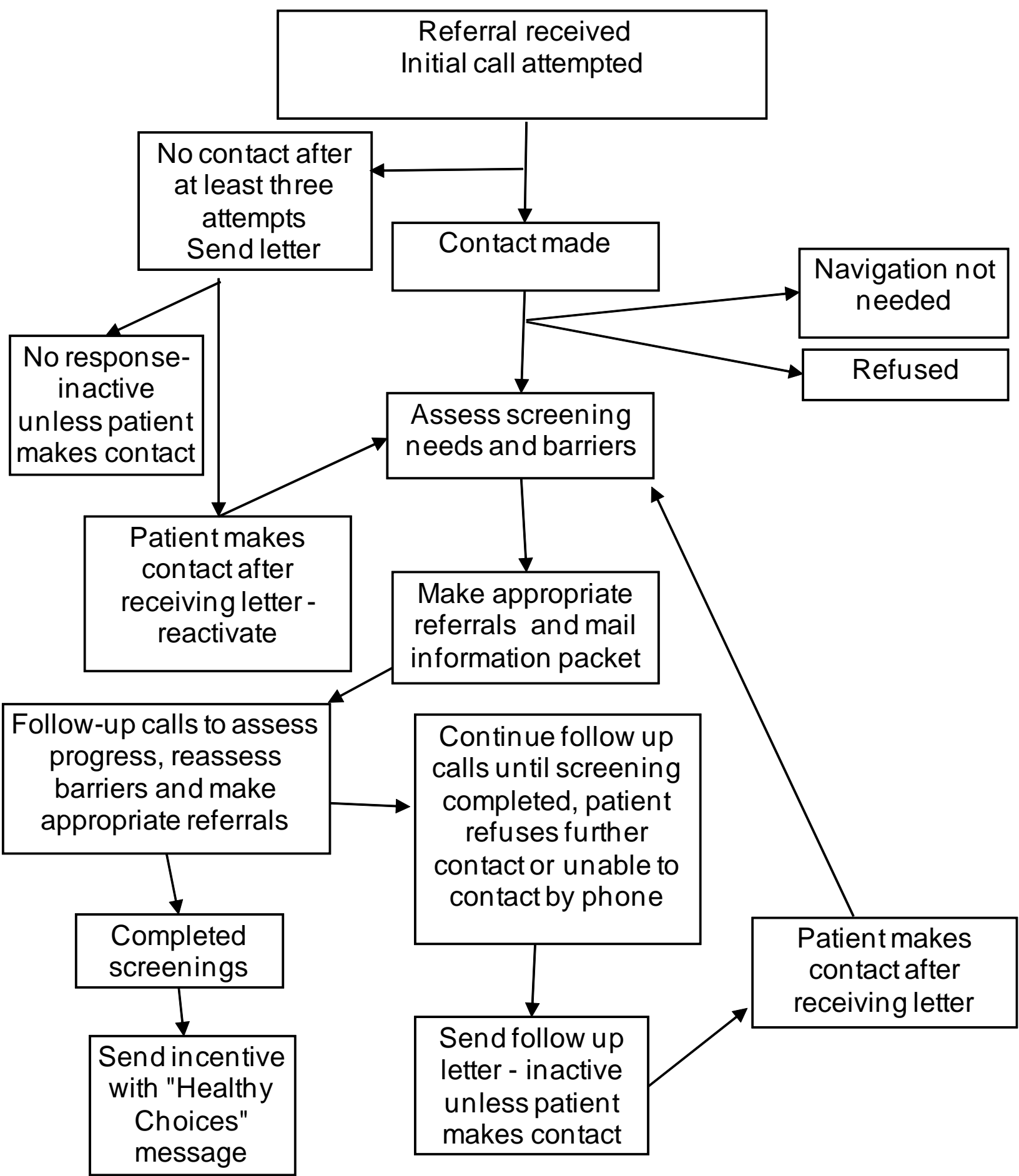
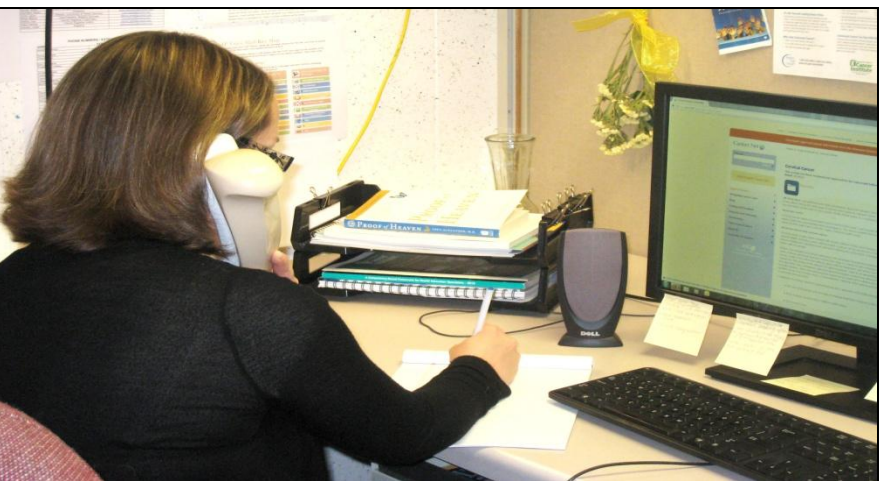


Figure 2. Navigation contact protocol

To further encourage participants to complete screenings the program is incentivized; participants receive a \$20 gift card for each completed screening. The gift cards are mailed to the participants along with additional information about making healthy choices that may lower their risk of developing cancer.

RESULTS

The Cancer Institute's years of experience, skilled staff and collaborative community orientation enabled the Navigation Program to become operational in a few short years and allowed the program to exceed its annual screening targets in 2013 and 2014.

(See table 1)

Table 1. Completed screenings by year

	2012	2013	2014	Totals
Enrolled	342	773	814	1,929
Contact attempts	5,278	13,606	16,278	35,162
Breast	96	214	274	504
Cervical	69	262	318	1,105
Colon	9	73	162	242
Total screenings	174	549	754	1,477

One hundred percent of participants are connected or re-connected to a medical home for ongoing preventative and routine health care.

A satisfaction survey is administered when a participant completes all program involvement and results are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Satisfaction survey

	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied
Satisfied with the Cancer Screening Navigation Program	97%	3%	0%
The navigator was helpful in obtaining cancer screenings	Agree 99%	Neutral 1%	Disagree 0%

CONCLUSIONS

The Cancer Institute Navigation Program is successful in reducing barriers to cancer screening. Screening for colon, breast and cervical cancers can reduce illness and death through early detection of cancers and pre-cancers - substantially reducing the personal economic burden of the disease and lessening the risk that low-income participants will become impoverished because of a cancer diagnosis. In addition to helping facilitate these potentially life-saving cancer screenings, what truly illustrates the impact of the program is the number of unsolicited positive comments received from participants. The program staff also gains a great deal of satisfaction from this feedback and from the fact that this program is having such a positive impact on these individuals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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