## Sample Media Placement

Patient navigation in health care is a multi-dimensional concept driven by the dual goals of improving patient outcomes and the patient experience with a health care system. By helping a patient diagnosed with cancer, for example, find out where to go, when, and how, plus for instance what questions to ask during a doctor's visit, navigation services empower the patient and make more efficient the delivery of care to that person, especially when most country health care systems are fragmented and complex. Good patient navigation is increasingly recognized internationally as a factor in how well a patient does with their diagnosis. There is strong evidence that patient navigation in breast cancer, for example, leads to earlier diagnosis, fewer unnecessary tests, and better health outcomes.

Some patient navigation services are provided by professional nurses or trained social workers contracted by the health care system itself (particularly in higher income countries), but many of the same non-clinical services are also provided by patient advocates at the community level. Because most medical offices and clinics are closed during the Covid-19 pandemic, many patients have turned to patient advocacy organizations to meet their navigation needs.

The navigation services provided by patient advocacy groups during the pandemic have been many, some of which include:

1. Information and advice about Covid-19 and specific health risks for patients with specific diseases or conditions;
2. Personalized advice to determine if a patient should leave their house for a physician's visit, diagnostic test, to continue to receive their medicine, or even if it's safe to go to the pharmacy;
3. Logistical support for a medicine or related health supplies to be delivered to a patient's home, and/or help with the process to increase a medicine prescription quantity to limit the number of trips outside;
4. Private ride-sharing arrangements for patients and their caregivers to avoid public transportation in order to reach necessary health care services;
5. Advice and preparation assistance to patients for tele-consultations with a physician or other health care provider;
6. Education and advice on self-management when diagnostic tests, doctor appointments, or medical procedures are postponed or canceled; and
7. How to obtain necessary authorizations from different health agencies (to overcome a bureaucratic access barrier) without having to do this in person.

In addition to pandemic-specific situations, patient advocacy organizations also routinely handle questions patients have about their disease, provide emotional support to address anxiety, give nutritional advice when diet is important in self-management, and provide the latest information on the medicines and diagnostic tests typically used to treat or diagnose a specific disease or condition.

Importantly, most of these navigation services are provided by advocates virtually and usually at no cost to the patient or caregiver participant. This is critical for low- income and otherwise vulnerable populations with limited resources or accessibility to private, professional advice.

Given the range of services provided and the growth in demand for this kind of assistance, the time is now for the government and the health care system to fund patient navigation programs. Here is why:

1. Difficult economic circumstances-exacerbated by the pandemic and projected to occur well into the future-will increase demand for affordable health care services. Navigation programs can help ensure continued access to health during the difficult road ahead;
2. Government support can help advocates to professionalize navigation programs and better ensure the public is aware of their availability. Transparency and accountability will be greater with public sources of funding;
3. Patient navigation can lead to cost-savings over time for both the health system and for individual patients required to pay for services out-of-pocket. In economic terms, there are less "transaction costs" when a patient's journey through the health care system is smoother; and
4. It is the government's responsibility to respect and help all citizens exercise their constitutional right to health. Patient navigation is increasingly viewed by experts as an effective approach to increasing access and improving health care quality, both of which are foundational elements for health rights and protection.

For more information about patient navigation programs and patient advocacy organizations, please contact AAA (insert contact information) or find further information at BBB (insert website resource).