

Oncology Nurse Navigation

Expansion of the navigator role through telehealth

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BACKGROUND: Residents of communities without local access to clinical oncology care face significant challenges that can be addressed through the use of technology. Teleoncology uses secure, interactive video- and audioconferencing and telephone communication to remotely deliver quality cancer care.

OBJECTIVES: This article introduces the role of the oncology nurse navigator (ONN) as a collaborative caregiver and virtual resource for patients and teleoncology providers.

METHODS: The literature on telehealth, nurse navigation, and teleoncology was reviewed to describe the ONN role and its integration with eHealth technologies.

FINDINGS: As a member of the interprofessional provider team, the ONN works collaboratively with patients and their family members and serves as a virtual resource. The ONN also provides clinical communication among clinical oncology providers and support staff. The ONN supports eHealth as a method of providing clinical care to patients close to their homes.

KEYWORDS

teleoncology; telenavigation; telehealth; eHealth; nurse navigation; nurse navigator

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION PAVED THE WAY for the development and implementation of innovative healthcare delivery models, including a shift from healthcare professionals dispensing medical knowledge to patients combing the Internet for answers. As health care moves into the next decade, partnerships involving patients and providers that use current technology are emerging (American Hospital Association, n.d.). Oncology practices also are embracing technologies that provide virtual medical consultations and oncology treatment to patients in areas where a lack of healthcare expertise may exist (Doyle-Lindrud, 2016). This article provides an overview of teleoncology and introduces telenavigation through the collaborative role of the oncology nurse navigator (ONN), who provides care in comprehensive cancer centers and clinic practices in the community.

Teleoncology Services

“Telehealth” is an umbrella term that is defined as the use of telecommunications technologies in the delivery of health care when the medical provider and the patient are in different locations (Health Resources and Services Administration, 2019). Telehealth applied in the oncology setting is termed “teleoncology” and describes the use of interactive video- and audioconferencing and telephone communication in the care of patients with cancer (Hazin & Qaddoumi, 2010). Rationale supporting teleoncology includes a predicted shortage of oncologists in the wake of an aging population and the disparity in oncology professionals practicing in urban versus rural areas of the United States (Charlton et al., 2015). Teleoncology has been used to provide genetic counseling, improve access to clinical trials, supervise remote cancer treatment, address symptom management, and provide survivorship care (Sirintrapun & Lopez, 2018). In addition, patients with cancer face physical, economic, and psychosocial barriers that can be addressed by nurses and other healthcare providers using teleoncology services (Larson et al., 2018). Teleoncology is a collaborative service that involves oncologists, nurses, and additional support staff (e.g., financial advocates, social workers, schedulers) (Doolittle & Spaulding, 2006).

The term “televisit” describes the virtual connection of patients and oncology providers using interactive video- and audioconferencing. A significant advantage of televisits supported by interactive video- and