

# Team publishes core competencies for oncology patient navigators

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The George Washington University (GW) Cancer Institute has finalized 45 core competency statements for oncology patient navigators, who have become critical members of the health care team. These competency statements were published in the *Journal of Oncology Navigation and Survivorship* and were created through literature review, focus group data analysis, expert review, and a national survey of oncology patient navigation stakeholders.

"Patient navigation is a rapidly growing health profession given new accreditation standards from the American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer. However, patient navigation suffers from a lack of standardization or regulation of any kind," said Mandi Pratt-Chapman, M.A., lead author and director of the GW Cancer Institute, which is housed within the GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences. "This means that patient navigator practices vary widely, sometimes performing administrative duties that underutilize unique skills and sometimes performing services that should be left to clinically-licensed [health care](#) professionals. The GW Cancer Institute Core Competencies for Oncology Patient Navigators are the first-ever consensus-based standards for the field to advance the profession and ensure we optimize all members of the health care team to support great patient care."

Of the respondents eligible to take the national survey, 98-81 percent endorsed the final competency statements. These competencies can be incorporated into training programs, such as a [new, online oncology](#)

[patient navigator course](#) developed by the GW Cancer Institute and funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to ensure consistent standards across the profession. The course will launch May 1, 2015.

In addition to creating 45 core competency statements, Pratt-Chapman and her team also wrote a framework defining the primary role and functions performed by oncology patient navigators, community health workers, and clinically licensed nurse and social worker navigators. The competencies were developed using this foundational framework by co-author Anne Willis, M.A., director of the patient-centered programs at the GW Cancer Institute.

The paper, "Core Competencies for Oncology Patient Navigators," was published in the journal's April 2015 edition.

Provided by George Washington University

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