

Research team tests intervention to reduce financial burden on cancer patients and caregivers

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Researchers at the University of Kentucky College of Nursing and DanceBlue Kentucky Children's Hospital Hematology/Oncology Clinic

found that receiving financial and legal navigation services improves levels of financial toxicity and quality of life for patients and caregivers.

Financial toxicity refers to the burden and stress a patient or [caregiver](#) has related to the cost of medical care. Patients undergoing [cancer treatment](#) and their caregivers often experience high levels of financial toxicity. Currently, very few evidence-based oncology financial and legal navigation programs exist to address this.

The research team's work to evaluate the impact of such services was [published](#) in March in the journal *JNCI Cancer Spectrum*.

"One way to help lessen this burden is to offer social, financial and legal navigation services and resources at the point of care or at the clinic they receive care in," said Jean Edward, Ph.D., associate professor in the College of Nursing.

Edward is a principal investigator on this [interdisciplinary study](#) with co-investigators John D'Orazio, M.D., Ph.D., chief of the Division of Hematology/Oncology at UK HealthCare and Kimberly Northrip, M.D., associate professor of pediatrics in the College of Medicine.

While investigating the best way to lessen financial toxicity, researchers at the DanceBlue Clinic decided to test a new interdisciplinary financial and legal navigation intervention for pediatric oncology patients and caregivers called FINassist (Financial and Insurance Navigation Assistance).

Using FINassist, clinic team members were trained in identifying financial and [legal issues](#) facing their patients and having conversations about the costs of care.

Utilizing financial navigators and lawyers, through a medical-legal

partnership with the clinic's social worker team, the clinic provided financial and legal navigation assistance to support pediatric, adolescent and young adult cancer patients and caregivers.

"The results show that there are resources available to help manage the costs of cancer treatment and overcome barriers to accessing care," said Edward.

As a result of receiving these services, patients and caregivers experienced significant reductions in financial toxicity and improvements in health-related quality of life. The participants who tested FINassist rated the intervention highly for feasibility, acceptability and appropriateness. They found the intervention to be helpful and would highly recommend it to others.

FINassist also helped save roughly \$335,323 in [financial benefits](#) for participants.

"The DanceBlue Clinic has one of the most robust psychosocial teams at UK HealthCare and continues to provide programs that address cancer-related financial [toxicity](#)," said D'Orazio. "This adds to our well-rounded approach to care for our patients on a variety of levels."

Patients and caregivers who access services at DanceBlue also have access to comprehensive health care services that include financial navigation among other services.

More information: Jean Edward et al, Financial-Legal navigation reduces financial toxicity of pediatric and AYA cancers, *JNCI Cancer Spectrum* (2024). [DOI: 10.1093/jncics/pkae025](https://doi.org/10.1093/jncics/pkae025)

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