

Mayo Clinic Q & A - Laura Kurland - Culture-specific patient...

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SPEAKERS

Dr. Halena Gazelka, Laura Kurland, Narrator

N Narrator 00:01
Coming up on Mayo Clinic Q&A,

L Laura Kurland 00:04
It's a really overwhelming experience for patients to come in here for cancer care. So, to be able to be a support and just be a point of contact, especially with the language barrier that sometimes exists, I think is a huge gift that Mayo is giving to patients here.

N Narrator 00:20
Navigating health care can be a complex matter for any patient, but especially so for those with a language or cultural barrier. To help those patients, a patient navigator can help them communicate with their health care providers and guide them through the healthcare system.

L Laura Kurland 00:35
Our role as patient navigators is to support with a lot of the non-clinical sides of their cancer journey. We are a part of that clinical team, but we're there to find what are the barriers to care, whether that's logistics, transportation, if they have issues with lodging when they're coming to a Mayo Clinic site for care, and certainly we're there to be an ear, a support, a guide as they're learning how to truly navigate the medical system.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 01:04
Welcome, everyone to Mayo Clinic Q&A. I'm your host, Dr. Halena Gazelka. Patient navigators

are a part of the care team to help guide patients to the health care system. at Mayo Clinic Cancer Center, patient navigators help with everything from finding information and resources, to offering emotional support. The Cancer Center has both general patient navigators who assist all patients and patient navigators who serve specific cultural patient populations. Here to discuss this with us today is Laura Kurland, a patient navigator serving Hispanic and Latino populations, at the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center. Welcome to the program, Laura.

L Laura Kurland 01:46

Thank you for having me.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 01:48

What a fun topic for us to get to discuss today. How we make it easier for people to navigate the healthcare system. So, I'm excited. Would you mind first describing for our listeners, how do you describe the role of a patient navigator to patients?

L Laura Kurland 02:05

Yeah, absolutely. So, I generally start by explaining to patients that our role as patient navigators is to support with a lot of the non-clinical sides of their cancer journey. We are a part of that clinical team, but we're there to find what are the barriers to care, whether that's logistics, transportation, if they have issues with lodging, when they're coming to a Mayo Clinic site for care, oftentimes helping them understand the finances, whether that's insurance, or other things that are going to be coming up that are going to be financial stressors for them as they're going through their cancer care. And certainly, we're there to be an ear, a support, a guide, as they're learning how to truly navigate the medical system, and we work with the team. So, we're finding out who they need to reach out to for help.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 02:56

Laura, why do you think it is important to have patient navigators who serve a specific patient population?

L Laura Kurland 03:02

I would say that the patient populations that we work with come with different experiences. Some come with a lack of knowledge or a lack of experience with U.S. mainstream medical experiences, or maybe they've had negative experiences in the past. So, our goal is to understand the values they bring. We support them with what their needs are, whether there are language barriers, or there's just gaps in cultural misunderstandings. And so, our role is to help bridge those gaps, clarify misunderstandings, and also be advocates to those populations.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 03:28

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 03:50

So, Laura at Mayo Clinic what culture specific navigators do we have?

L Laura Kurland 03:45

So, currently we are just growing as a team. We're new to these roles as patient navigators for culturally specific communities. I support the Hispanic Latino population here in Rochester, Minnesota. My colleague Schylar Martin supports the Native American population in the Rochester, I'd say Midwest region. Trudie Jackson works in Arizona supporting the Native American population there. And then Veronica Smith is currently helping the African descendant population down in Florida. And I think that as we see where those needs are, this position will hopefully grow, and we'll find out how we can help other populations that could really benefit from this role.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 04:26

So, Laura in your work does that mean that you speak Spanish?

L Laura Kurland 04:30

Yes, I am fully bilingual.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 04:31

Oh, wonderful. What tools are in the navigator toolbox?

L Laura Kurland 04:36

So, we really have a lot of tools both internally and externally that we support patients with. You know, internally we're housed in the Cancer Education Center. So, we have a plethora of written materials. We have access to the educators that work in the center. I work very directly with social work and financial counselors to support patients with their needs. We also have a lot of written materials externally from NIH, from www.cancer.gov that we can help access for patients. We are also connected with a lot of funding resources. There's lots of organizations, third party organizations that are out to help with financial grants and education materials for patients.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 05:19

That's a lot. What do you find that patients need the most? What do you help with most often?

L Laura Kurland 05:25

I would say my role and specifically my population, there's a lot of communication barriers. So, definitely there's a language communication barrier. But I would also say oftentimes I find patients needing to learn how to do self-advocacy. So, coaching patients on how they can play a role in their own care and the importance of dialoguing with their clinical team. I also do a lot with explaining the role of interpreters and language services, clarifying the importance of relying on those language services versus having family members or trying to just, you know, work through the language gaps that might exist. I also see myself clarifying and supporting patients and understanding the finance side, what insurance looks like, and then helping them apply and access funding resources externally.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 06:16

So, tell us a little bit more about how navigators help to support families and their caregivers.

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Laura Kurland 06:22

Yeah, I mean, oftentimes the caregivers in the families are the doers. Patients really are overwhelmed with the care that they're receiving, so they look to support from people around them. So, we're helping those caregivers access, transportation, lodging resources, help them advocate for their patient that's getting the care they need. I personally work a lot with adult children who are those bilingual communicators for their parents that are non-English speakers. And so, I try to also involve the non-English speaking patient. And so, we become a team together to really support the patient and meet them where they're at with their cancer care.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 07:03

Laura, if there are patients listening at Mayo Clinic who are interested in having a navigator work with them, how would they find out if they were eligible, or if there was navigator assistance in the area that they're visiting?

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Laura Kurland 07:17

You know, for patients that are going to be seen at Mayo Clinic, and especially for these culturally specific patients, we are actually doing pre-emptive or outreach before they even come to Mayo. So, if they're coming for appointments, our goal is to reach out to as many as possible prior to their visits. You know, the Cancer Education Centers are open to the public, and they can contact us directly or walk in and visit us if they ever need that information. I would say for people who maybe don't have a patient navigator option at their location for cancer care, I would recommend that they do reach out to social work, because we truly are an arm in support of that. And that would probably be the most similar to what patient navigation is.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 08:00

Does every healthcare provider now supply navigators? This was a new concept to me earlier this year

this year.

L Laura Kurland 08:07

So, currently it really is being focused here in the Cancer Center. So, we are supporting patients whether they're coming through medical oncology, hematology, or radiation oncology. And so, yeah we are available to all patients. Like I said, we do have culturally specific navigators to help those populations. But any patient who's coming in for cancer care can access us.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 08:30

If there are patients who are going to other healthcare institutions that don't have navigators necessarily, are there patient resources that they could utilize to help their own journey?

L Laura Kurland 08:41

Yeah, certainly. I think, you know, we really rely a lot on resources like www.cancer.gov, www.cancer.org, the American Cancer Society's website is phenomenal, but also leaning into the social work team and any therapy supports that are at the sites that they're going to.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 08:59

That's wonderful. Thank you for sharing this with us today, Laura. How interesting.

L Laura Kurland 09:04

Yes, thank you for this opportunity to share our work.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 09:06

It feels like it would be a very satisfying job. I hope that you enjoy it.

L Laura Kurland 09:10

It's very satisfying. And I also feel relieved to see that we are helping these populations. And it's a really overwhelming experience for patients to come in here for cancer care. So, to be able to be a support and just be a point of contact, especially with the language barrier that sometimes exists, I think is a huge gift that Mayo is giving to patients here.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 09:34

It's wonderful. Our thanks to Laura Kurland, patient navigator at Mayo Clinic Cancer Center for being with us today to talk about her work. I hope that you learned something. I know that I did.

being with us today to talk about her role. I hope that you learned something. I know that I did. We wish each of you a wonderful day.



Narrator 09:48

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