

## **Cancer Patient Navigation: Published Information**

### *Abstract*

Cancer patient navigation services and programs as well as patient navigators are increasingly available to cancer patients throughout the United States. C-Change, a nonprofit organization created “to leverage the leadership and expertise of all sectors of society to eliminate cancer,” has been exploring the topic through the work of its Access to Quality Cancer Care Team. It defines patient navigation in cancer care partly as “individualized assistance offered to patients, families, and caregivers to help overcome health care system barriers and facilitate timely access to quality medical and psychosocial care from pre-diagnosis through all phases of the cancer experience ....” The idea of using patient navigators to assure that patients receive timely diagnosis and treatment originated with Dr. Harold Freeman, a cancer surgeon practicing in Harlem, NYC, and now Director of the Ralph Lauren Cancer Control Center and head of the Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities (CRCHD) at the National Cancer Institute (NCI). The concept developed by Dr. Freeman proved successful and expanded to other treatment centers.

The purpose of this paper, commissioned by C-Change, is to provide background information, from published and other sources, on current patient navigation programs and services. It identifies research and program descriptions published in the medical and social sciences literature documenting the need for and role of patient navigation in cancer care. It explores the history of cancer care coordination and patient navigation in the United States, examines existing models that address the access and navigation needs of cancer patients, and reviews issues in U.S. health care that affect cancer patients’ ability to move through the health care system. It concludes that patient navigation services and programs hold the promise of improving timely access to diagnosis and treatment, assisting patients and caregivers in managing and coordinating cancer care, and helping them achieve an acceptable quality of life.