Improving Cultural Sensitivity in Health Care and Hospice Settings for Immigrants with Cancer

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Background

The number of Latino immigrants living in the US with cancer is growing. They face significant challenges navigating the health care system and receiving culturally competent medical treatment and end-of-life care.

There is critical need for:

- Consistent use of appropriate interpreting services
- Improved provider training in cultural competency
- System changes to address the unique needs of immigrant populations
Project Description

- Advocacy work done with an undocumented woman from Mexico and her family, and the challenges they encountered from the time of her diagnosis with stomach cancer through her end-of-life care.

- Follow-up with health care and hospice systems to address challenges and recommend system changes.
Advocacy Services

The Center for Patient Partnerships provides free advocacy services to people with serious and life-threatening illnesses around a variety of issues including:

- Medical decision making
- Insurance
- Employment
- Disability
- Health care system navigation
- End-of-life care
Main Issues

- Communication barriers
- Medical decision-making
- Insurance retention
- Family struggles
- End-of-life care needs
Hospice Challenges

- Understanding and accepting hospice concept
- Expectations and follow through
- Communication issues during stressful end-of-life situations
- Pain management
- Home care versus inpatient care
Hospice Recommendations

- Update in-take form removing residency references
- Implement consistent use of interpreting services
- Incorporate or improve cultural competency training program for nurses and hospice care providers
- Fully address important predictable issues during decline
Resulting System Changes

- Revised interpreter contracting system
- More detailed patient team briefings
- Expanded cultural sensitivity training
- Forms no longer include reference to residency status
- All supporting policies and protocols have been updated to ensure that internal documents are also consistent
Conclusion

- Cultural sensitivity affects millions of patients and families and the need for improved care is growing.

- This case exemplifies the varied avoidable complications that exist in receiving culturally appropriate care.

- Systems-level changes in health care and end-of-life care are critically needed to better serve ethnically diverse populations.
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