

Utilization of the Neighborhood Navigator tool in Clinical Practice

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Abstract

Purpose: Neighborhood Navigator (NN) is a tool designed through the AAFP to help clinicians identify social resources for patients and provide them with access to said resources. This study aimed to determine resident attitudes and impressions of its use in point-of-care settings in clinical practice.

Methods: Over the course of a 3 month trial period, PGY1, 2, and 3 residents were tasked with identifying 10 patients who would benefit from additional social resources available through NN and offer these to the patient (the agencies independently contacted the patients via phone or email). The trial included all resident-training clinical sites: Erie HealthReach Waukegan Health Center (a Federally Qualified Health Center), Northwestern Medicine Family Medicine Grayslake Outpatient Center, and Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital. At the conclusion of the trial period, the residents participated in a survey featuring both Likert scale and free response questions to assess usability and impressions of the tool in clinical practice.

Results: 11 of 24 residents responded to the survey. 63.6% felt “neutral” on the ability of NN to facilitate conversations with patients. 90.9% “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that NN was easily incorporated into a clinical encounter. 27.3% “agreed” that they would continue to use NN in future clinical encounters. 54% of referrals came from the Waukegan site and 40% from the Grayslake site; mental health represented the largest single category at both sites (27% and 23%, respectively)

Conclusions: A majority of residents did not feel that the NN facilitated conversations with patients, with a still-larger majority expressing that the tool was not easily incorporated into clinical encounters. Providing clinicians with resources is just the first step in better addressing social determinants of health in patient care.

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