

2009 Reynolds Grantee 8th Annual Meeting October 21-23, 2009 Las Vegas, NV

The Navigator Program Sets Sail

Institution

University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS), the UMMS-AGE (Advancing Geriatrics Education) Reynolds team

Purpose of the exercise

- 1) To heighten medical and nursing students' awareness of the complexity of health issues facing elderly patients by offering them an early immersion experience before their traditional clinical years.
- 2) To expose medical and nursing students to the challenges of effectively communicating with an aging patient population about their medical problems, appreciate health literacy issues, and to begin to develop their own communication style and techniques.
- 3) To augment health literacy in older adults and empower them about their health concerns.

Teaching venue Diverse, multidisciplinary outpatient clinic offices, both primary care and specialties.

Learners First and second year medical students and nursing students. At UMMS, 10% of second year medical students will be trained as "navigators" in the upcoming academic year.

How to implement The brainchild of a first year UMMS student, the Navigator Program pairs elderly patients with volunteer medical and graduate nursing students who accompany a patient into the exam room for their doctor's visit. Receptive outpatient clinics are recruited. At UMMS, patients have been recruited through multilingual brochures and community outreach efforts. An email account and a telephone hotline have been set up for patients to conveniently request a navigator.

What information is provided to the learners before the exercise? A Navigator training manual is provided to students upon enrollment.

What instructions are given to the learners for the exercise? The student navigator meets with the patient in a private area after the visit to review and clarify key points about their appointment. The navigator takes notes during the doctor's visit to give to the patient afterwards.

How are the learners debriefed? Seasoned navigators train novice navigators by attending clinic appointments with them and debriefing them on their patient encounter. At UMMS, evaluation forms have been designed for student navigators and for participating physicians and patients.