

MedStar Georgetown University

Engaging patients with an iPad based survey is resulting in better patient data.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital is one of forty-one comprehensive cancer centers in the United States and the only comprehensive cancer center in the Washington, D.C. area. It is also one of the few centers that recently implemented a new patient engagement tool that screens for distress among cancer patients.



MedStar Georgetown
University Hospital



Joanne Assarsson, LICSW, OSW-C

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Current use of patient engagement tools

Perspective

According to Joanne Assarsson, LICSW, OSW-C, a clinical social worker at MedStar Georgetown, “The catalyst for this work was the Commission on Cancer’s new standards for 2015, which require that cancer patients be screened for distress at least once during a pivotal medical visit. MGUH’s pivotal visit has been defined as the first clinic visit in Medical or Radiation Oncology. A new patient appointment is the visit type most commonly used in response to standards and is easily identified in our EMR system. Our goal was to find a way to adhere to the standards while working with a staffing ratio that would have made any paper and pencil effort (which is currently the norm around the country) impossible.” Our vision also included finding a platform that could assess distress in an interactive and user-friendly way. We also wanted to provide clinicians with results and reports in ‘real time’ with a program that would communicate seamlessly with the electronic medical record (EMR). During the development and implementation of our distress screen, we maintained a focus on minimizing the impact on clinic flow from both the patient and the provider perspective. Tonic Health’s patient engagement platform does all of the above while providing us with data to develop and modify programs based on our patients’ needs.”

Patients in outpatient Medical or Radiology Medicine are directed to the New Patient Assessment Area upon check-in and complete the distress screen on an iPad that is mounted in a stand. The stands are lightweight, adjustable and accommodate those individuals in wheelchairs, or who prefer to sit during the completion of the screen. Clinicians receive both pager and email alerts in real time upon completion of the screen and respond according to a set protocol. This allows the clinicians to prioritize responses based on our protocol and easily identify patients in need of services. A copy of the screener is currently being manually imported into the EMR; however work is underway that will allow for direct communication between the patient engagement iPad platform and the EMR (ARIA).

Outcomes

Preliminary data indicates that the Commission on Cancer's new standards for 2015 have been successfully met. According to Joanne Assarsson, "Anecdotal feedback suggests that patients are very receptive to the screener from an ease-of-use perspective. This technology gives us the ability to appropriately triage the patients, educate them about psychosocial services, and communicate with the medical team about their patients' psychosocial distress. The platform also provides a digital format so when an intervention is needed, it is much easier to highlight the necessary data, and communicate efficiently with the relevant clinician." It is too early to accurately comment on improved satisfaction."

"MedStar Georgetown now has a platform for longitudinal screening for the future that could be broadened to include all patients rather than just those who present for their first visit. We can now ask the same set of questions in the future and easily measure change. This was difficult – if not impossible — prior to implementation," Assarsson said.

Future Plans

MedStar purchased an enterprise user license of Tonic Health, and future plans include expanding the distress screener to additional facilities within the MedStar integrated healthcare delivery system. MedStar is implementing Tonic in a variety of additional applications that include eliminating intake forms at outpatient sites, and leveraging survey capabilities to more effectively and efficiently educate patients on conditions and treatment options using short-form video. In short, there are many ways that user-friendly, electronic tools, can improve MedStar's ability to meet their patients' medical needs with high ease of use and convenience.

About Tonic Health

Tonic Health (www.tonicforhealth.com) is an iPad- and web-based medical data collection platform that uses extreme patient engagement and real-time predictive analytics to dramatically improve the process of gathering, analyzing and acting upon patient data. The Tonic platform is secure and HIPAA-compliant, and interfaces with existing EMR installations and other backend databases. Based in Palo Alto, Calif., Tonic provides a Disney-like experience for patients across a broad range of its leading enterprise health system customers, including Partners HealthCare, New York-Presbyterian, MedStar Health, UCLA Health, UC San Francisco, the Veterans Health Administration, Florida Hospital, Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford and more.

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