



2023 MCC Cancer Control Pilot Project Award

Examining Guideline Concordant Cancer Care Among Low English Proficiency Patients

Tala Al-Rousan, MD MPH
Winta Mehtsun, MD, MPH

Scientific Abstract:

Approximately 25 million people in the United States have limited English proficiency (LEP) and a quarter of people living in California are foreign-born, posing challenges to patient-provider communication. This is especially relevant in oncology, where clinicians must engage patients in shared decision making. Consequently, disparities in healthcare access and cancer outcomes persist for LEP patients. This is a concern in San Diego County, which has vulnerable communities with LEP who are greatly affected by breast, lung, colon, and gastric cancers specifically. Overall, the quality of cancer care provided to LEP patients at the University of California San Diego (UCSD), and how this care compares to other tertiary hospitals within the University of California (UC) health system, is poorly described. These tertiary facilities play a key role serving LEP patients within California. Against this backdrop, the proposed project will assess guideline-concordant care (GCC) for breast, lung, colon, and gastric cancer among LEP patients treated within the six UC health system centers (UCSD Health, UC Davis Health, UCI Health, UCLA Health, UCR Health, and UCSF Health). We will use mixed methods to 1) quantitatively assess rates of GCC survival and 2) qualitatively investigate barriers/facilitators to receipt of GCC for LEP treated for the selected cancers between 2012 and 2022. This pilot project's findings will inform an extramurally funded grant that will design and implement an intervention to increase receipt of GCC oncologic care for LEP patients across the UC health system. We hope to improve access to care and resultant quality of life for LEP patients in California with cancer.

Lay Abstract:

While the Affordable Care Act has expanded access to health care for many people living in the United States, certain challenges to receiving care continue to exist, particularly for growing immigrant and refugee populations. One such challenge is language differences, which limit the ability of patients with limited English proficiency (LEP) to navigate the health system and to build relationships with their providers. LEP patients with cancer often are diagnosed at later stages, are at risk of receiving inadequate treatments, and sometimes report dissatisfaction with their care. With a significant proportion of the San Diego and larger California population having LEP, it is crucial to understand whether differences in cancer care are present for these patients treated within the UC Health system. Our study will fill this gap of knowledge by using existing data and interviewing select patients within the UC health system, which see a high percentage of LEP patients. Through this study, we will understand cancer care for patients with LEP and will use this knowledge to develop extramurally funded initiatives, both locally in the short-term and state-wide in the long-term, that help make

cancer care more accessible and high-quality for LEP patients.