

SYSTEMNEWS

JULY/AUGUST 2023

WHEN WONDERING, COULD THIS BE CANCER?

NAVIGATORS MAKE CARE EASY



When a patient shows up to the Emergency Department (ED) with concerning symptoms—unexplained pain or swelling, perhaps—sometimes that is only the start of a longer journey marked with a big letter “C” for cancer. Patients who learn from their ED physician that their symptoms may be cancer now have more support for the next steps, thanks to a Penn Medicine initiative at two hospitals.

Not only is care easier for patients, but it’s easy for the ED provider to help them get the support they need. The ED provider simply completes a “Consult to Nurse Navigator” referral order for these patients in PennChart, Penn Medicine’s electronic health record. That order is automatically sent to an inbox shared by the Abramson Cancer Center’s (ACC’s) team of oncology nurse navigators. The navigator who focuses on the body site of the potential cancer—for example, lung or gastrointestinal—will then reach out to the patient, within two to three days. “We tell patients, “The navigator will get you to where and what you need,” said **Keith Hemmert, MD**, the ED medical director at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (HUP).

A Guide to Get Evaluated for Cancer

Most patients come to a cancer diagnosis through the traditional route: They notice something concerning and visit their primary care doctor, or a troubling result shows up on labs or scans. But for some, the ED is their starting point. “Lung cancer, for example, doesn’t have many symptoms until it progresses,” explained oncology nurse navigator **Megan Roy, MSN, RN, OCN**; a patient who has lung cancer may present at the ED for shortness of breath, chest pain, severe back pain, or in rare instances coughing up blood. In other cases, patients visit the ED for something unrelated, and something shows up on their exam or scan that could be a sign of cancer.

Before the initiative started, patients who left the ED with a suspicion of cancer would go home with instructions to contact the oncology call center to make an appointment. But if the patient doesn’t have a confirmed cancer diagnosis, getting an appointment to see cancer specialists

at HUP can be tricky. In a big academic medical center such as HUP, there are no general oncologists to work up a patient and get a diagnosis, noted Roy: “HUP’s oncologists are highly specialized. It is difficult to know who to see first, which makes scheduling appointments challenging.”

It was a frustrating situation for ED providers as well. “We didn’t have a good discharge pathway,” Hemmert said. Patients in this situation need additional testing which can’t be performed in the ED.

“Many patients aren’t sick enough to require admission to the hospital, but they’d return to the ED a week later, saying they couldn’t set up an appointment,” noted Hemmert. The ED providers didn’t want to admit patients to the hospital who didn’t truly need to be there.

When the ACC nurse navigators learned of this gap in care—sometimes directly from patients they were able to meet with—they identified where they could intervene. The result was the new option in PennChart,

► The Abramson Cancer Center’s nurse navigators can now help patients find their way to getting a diagnosis.

built with ED leadership, where clinicians can refer patients to the oncology nurse navigators. It provides patients with an immediate and personal connection with a trustworthy navigator who helps them get a diagnosis and treatment.

Easing Access to Cancer Treatment

The change in process has led to remarkable results. Since the start of the new referral program in May 2022, navigators have helped bring more than 175 ED patients into the treatment they need, efficiently and expeditiously. Consider the case of a patient seen in HUP’s ED early this year; the ED clinician sent a referral to the oncology nurse navigators. Roy, who focuses on patients with lung cancer, contacted the patient the following day to get her care started. Three days later, the patient was seen by interventional pulmonology for a bronchoscopy to take a biopsy. The patient had a diagnosis two weeks later, and started treatment in early March.

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COMING SOON— OUR NEW NEWSLETTER!

WE’RE SO EXCITED FOR THE LAUNCH of *Inside Penn Medicine*, our new employee newsletter that will debut in September!

With a fresh new design and a mission to bring you news from across the health system—innovative programs, Difference Makers, awards and accolades, heartwarming stories, and more—it will replace *System News* and any entity-specific publications found within. (This is the last one!)

No matter where we work or what we do, we are all part of One Penn Medicine—and the new publication reflects that mission. We can’t wait to share it with you!





RINGING IN THE "BELL OF HOPE"

WITH A NEW LOCATION AND MURAL

For cancer patients, the ringing of the bell has long signified healing, hope, and a symbolic end to the most difficult era of their cancer journey. Although it has been typically reserved for patients completing their chemotherapy or radiation treatment, Penn Medicine has set out to make the bell-ringing ceremony more inclusive of patients who have ongoing, sometimes lifelong care, so they are not excluded from the opportunity to celebrate milestones in their treatment.

► Melanie Zisa, RN, BSN, OCN (left) and Elizabeth (Liz) Concepcion (right) stand together as Liz is the first patient to ring the new "Bell of Hope" at the ceremony on May 16.



The team at Penn Medicine Cherry Hill (PMCH), an outpatient center providing primary and specialty medical care in New Jersey, has led the charge in transforming the bell-ringing ceremony to include all cancer patients and to celebrate a variety of their milestones: a good scan, a good lab result, or even a good day.

On May 16, **Melanie Zisa, RN, BSN, OCN**, infusion nurse supervisor at PMCH, led a special ribbon-cutting ceremony to reveal the "Bell of Hope," which also includes a new bell location and wall mural by **Paula Breslin-Perry**, a senior improvement quality advisor at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center who is also an artist.

The addition of the mural provided PMCH an opportunity to relocate the bell to a hallway adjacent to the oncology and non-oncology infusion bay area. The dedicated, thoughtful location is still within the infusion suite, but in a place removed far enough that the ceremony would not disturb other patients. The new location also allows for family and friends to be present for the ceremony.

Zisa asked a five-year cancer survivor of small cell lung cancer, Elizabeth (Liz) Concepcion, to be the first bell ringer at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Since her diagnosis in 2018, Concepcion has been on maintenance treatment for her cancer. As a patient who will never officially see the end of treatment due to her maintenance immunotherapy, she was one of the main inspirations for the reimagined "Bell of Hope" ceremony.

Additionally, the Janine Hee Foundation donated a plaque to be displayed with the new bell location. Hee, who was treated at an infusion site in Sewell, NJ for colon cancer before passing away, was close to the hearts of the PMCH staff. Her family created the foundation in her name and has been a supporter of Penn Medicine's three New Jersey infusion suites. The plaque bears the inspirational words of Hee, "Don't wait until you reach your goal to be proud of yourself. Be proud every step you take."

► In the same hallway as the tree mural is the HOPE mural, also by artist and Penn Presbyterian Medical Center employee Paula Breslin-Perry.



► The Janine Hee Foundation donated a plaque to be displayed with the new bell location. The plaque includes a quote from the late Janine Hee who was a patient at Penn Medicine Cherry Hill.

WHEN WONDERING, COULD THIS BE CANCER? NAVIGATORS MAKE CARE EASY

Now she's on preventative treatment. "She had no idea she had lung cancer and five weeks later was already in curative treatment. It was found early enough," marveled Roy.

But the road to treatment is not always straightforward for every patient, so navigators also help with other challenges along the way. People experience symptoms that feel like an emergency to them. Often, it's pain, which can make waiting for the next available diagnostic appointment excruciating.

Roy recalled a patient who was discharged from the ED with suspected prostate cancer. **Shannon Meier, MSN, BSN, RN**, an oncology nurse navigator who works with genitourinary patients, got him scheduled with medical oncology for three weeks later. However, the patient had what were later found to be spine metastases which were very painful. "He was in agony," Roy said.

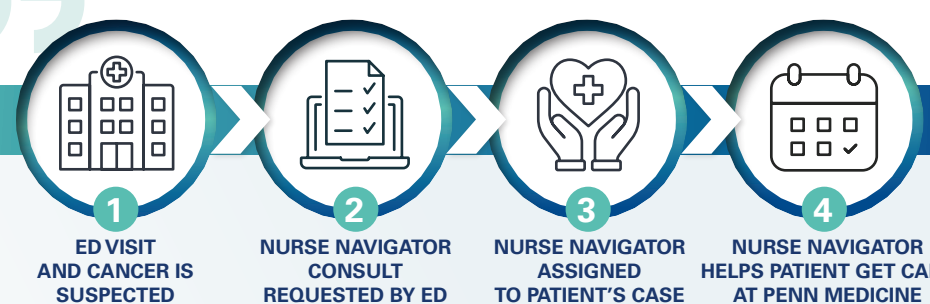
Meier was able to get the patient an appointment at the Radiation Oncology Urgent Spine Clinic for pain. He was then

admitted, received a diagnosis of multiple myeloma, and started on immediate treatment.

"We want to decrease the amount of burden on the patient, who already doesn't feel well," said oncology nurse navigator **Trish Gambino, MSN, RN**.

Sometimes, when a patient with cancer symptoms comes to the ED for care, it's because they don't have access to a primary care doctor who can help them with specialty care. But when the patient's medical record says "no primary care physician," that's not always the case. After initially speaking with patients, especially those who have immigrated to this country, Gambino and other nurse navigators often discover that they do see a doctor in the community who may not necessarily be affiliated with Penn.

"I always call that person to touch base about the patient's visit to the ED," she said. "They know best how to make [the next steps in their care] work for a patient. We have to involve those who already know the patient and respect the community providers."



Spreading the Word and Sharing the Strategy

The ACC nurse navigator program is working so well in the HUP ED that Hemmert is constantly talking it up: "Providers want this pathway. Once they use it, they don't forget about it." Indeed, it is part of the ED orientation for new physicians and is re-publicized among ED providers every few months. The program is now live at HUP, both in the Pavilion ED and at HUP-Cedar, and Penn Presbyterian Medical Center (PPMC).

To further their outreach, the nurse navigators also educated employees in the oncology call center, making sure they refer these ED patients to the navigators. "Now they know the patient needs a nurse navigator to help," Gambino said. "We can drill down to what's going on with a patient and that comes from years of experience."

The referral program also led to the opening this year of the Oncology Diagnostic Clinic at PPMC. Led by oncologists **Christopher D'Avella, MD**, and **Christine Ciunci, MD, MSCE**, the clinic is for patients with a high suspicion of cancer—such as abnormal lab work or a tumor found in a scan—but no formal diagnosis. The oncologists order any further testing that's needed to diagnose (or rule out) cancer and connect the patient to the right subspecialist for treatment.

Hemmert said that not only is the referral program a huge success, but it's also a model for what the future of care could look like. "It's an effective and reliable bridge between the ED and outpatient care—connecting patients who could be discharged to get appropriate patient care in a timely manner," he said. "This is where we need to get to. But we need to think not just oncology but across the spectrum of all services we offer at Penn."

pennmedicine @WORK

NEW BENEFIT "Wellthy" COMING SOON! Care Shouldn't Be Something You Tackle Alone. Wellthy Can Help.

Balancing career, family, and personal life can be challenging, especially when you're caring for loved ones. In an effort to support employees, the University of Pennsylvania Health System (UPHS) is providing you and your families with access to Wellthy—a caregiving support solution—as a covered benefit.

What Is Wellthy? Wellthy is a health care navigation and caregiving concierge benefit. Wellthy's care solution includes an online dashboard and support from a Wellthy Care Coordinator who will oversee administrative and logistical tasks on your family's behalf. Wellthy also includes access to Wellthy Community, a social space where members can find support, share experiences, and exchange knowledge with others who are providing care.

How Does Wellthy Work? Wellthy provides support no matter where you are in your caregiving journey. If you need one-on-one assistance from someone who knows the health care industry, you can create a Care Project to get matched with a dedicated Wellthy Care Expert. Or, if you prefer to pursue the solution independently, you can use your Wellthy account to utilize self-service tools within the Care Dashboard and explore discussions in Wellthy Community.

Who Does Wellthy Support? Wellthy is available to help you care for yourself or any of your loved ones. This includes parents, children, spouses, in-laws, siblings, neighbors, or anyone who has care needs that affect your day-to-day life.

What Can Wellthy Help With? Wellthy can help you navigate personalized care needs across your and your loved one's lives. This includes tasks related to:

- **Childcare:** Babysitters, nannies, alternative learning solutions, and camps
- **Medical Care:** Specialized providers, prescriptions, appointments, and medical records
- **Financial Support:** Social Security, benefits, insurance, tax deductions, and grant applications
- **Housing:** Senior living, moving services, and short-term living solutions
- **In-Home Support:** Home safety, in-home aides, transportation services, and meal delivery
- **Legal Advice:** Power of attorney, Advance Directives, and wills
- **Social + Emotional Wellbeing:** Support groups, social activities, memory care, and respite care

Be on the lookout for upcoming communication about Wellthy and how to get started in your mail and e-mail. Email WorkLife@pennmedicine.upenn.edu with any questions.



THE BEST CARE FOR PATIENTS STARTS WITH THE BEST CARE FOR YOU



UPHS believes that the best care for patients starts with the best care for employees. That's why the Wellfocused team is committed to making living a healthy lifestyle easier than ever by helping employees take control of their health, manage mental wellness, improve their financial fitness, and more. When you are healthier, you feel better, you perform better at work, and you have the energy to spend quality time with family and friends at home. Whether you're a regular Wellfocused user or are brand new to the program, you have a fresh opportunity to take control of your well-being journey since the Wellfocused program year restarted on July 6.

The Wellfocused app combines useful tools, educational content, and social support to help you give your best at work and at home. This year, earn up to \$400 as you participate in programs through the platform.

To get started with Wellfocused, visit pennmedicine.limeade.com or download the Limeade ONE iOS or Android app. All employees, regardless of medical coverage, are eligible to participate.

If you have questions about the Wellfocused program, please email wellfocused@pennmedicine.upenn.edu.



Seven Churches, Seven Lifesaving Devices, ONE COMMON GOAL



Making health care and health education accessible to surrounding and underserved local communities is what the Wellness Department at Chester County Hospital (CCH) strives for each and every day. This group is dedicated to bridging the gap in these communities by collaborating with local businesses and residents to identify where the greatest health needs are located and how they can lessen the burden. One community the CCH Wellness Department supports is Coatesville, PA—and a recent initiative helps further this work.

The CCH Wellness Department recently received a \$10,000 grant from the Huston Foundation. With this grant, the team decided to gift seven Coatesville churches with AED (automated external defibrillator) devices, and provide training to parish leadership and to their congregations on how to safely use the devices in an emergency.

The Greater Coatesville community has voiced concern over the recent closing of area hospitals and the uncertainty for accessing timely emergency services. With heart disease being the leading cause of death in the Central-West Chester region, including Coatesville, these church leaders want to be prepared to help their community in a time of need.

The seven churches that received the AEDs were selected with the help of Minnie McNeil, a prominent Coatesville community leader from the W.C. Atkinson (WCA) Center, and **Abigail McNeil, RN, BSN**, a Penn Medicine at Home nurse and president of Minority Nurse Educators of Chester County. In order to receive an AED, the churches needed to meet certain qualifications that included:

- Being able to identify a location for the AED that is visible and unobstructed
- Identifying a qualified AED coordinator who is CPR certified
- Have the ability to maintain and operate the AED

Once the churches were identified, CCH coordinated and hosted free Basic Life Support (BLS) and AED training on March 27 for representatives from each of the churches.

On May 17, CCH's Director of Wellness, **Michele Francis**, and Community Health Education Coordinator, **Chad Thomas**, visited Coatesville City Hall to distribute the AEDs. Attendees came from the seven churches, as well as Minnie McNeil, Abigail McNeil, and Coatesville Assistant City Manager Roberta Cosentino.

"Our goal was to make sure the churches were comfortable with these devices and that they had enough people that could provide and be trained in basic life support, including the use of an AED," said Francis.

"We're so happy to be able to work with Chester County Hospital in supporting the Coatesville community and the local churches who need these devices," said Minnie McNeil. "The trainings that they offer are a crucial part in making sure that everyone can readily assist in case of an emergency. An equipped and informed community is a safer community."

The effort isn't stopping there. To better support this initiative, the CCH Wellness team is hosting further training to provide hands-on education for additional church members. This training, provided by the staff of the Chester County Public Safety Training Center, Minority Nurse Educators, and CCH, and will focus on hands-only CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and AED usage.

"Our partnership with the Minority Nurse Educators of Chester County and with the W.C. Atkinson Center is extremely appreciated," stated Thomas. "With their help, we are able to support the Coatesville community in getting easier access to health care education."



DIFFERENCE MAKERS A VISUAL-FRIENDLY SOLUTION TO ENHANCE HEALTH LITERACY

When a patient wasn't attending his scheduled appointments at Pennsylvania Hospital, oncology nurse navigator **Jennifer Polo, BSN, RN, OCN**, and her team had to think creatively to get him back on track.

Polo, who received the referral, consulted with a social worker on her team to speak with the patient about why he was missing his visits. In conversation with the social worker, the patient felt comfortable disclosing he had an inability to read and could not understand his appointment schedule.

As a nurse navigator, Polo's mission is to help patients navigate the health care system to get the care they need as quickly as possible, which includes helping them with challenges, like health literacy, that could prevent them from accessing care.

To help the patient stay on top of his scheduled visits, Polo and her team developed a visual calendar with colorful icons representing different appointments, such as a heart icon to signify a cardiologist appointment. The calendar also included headshots of herself and the social worker with their contact information.

"The patient was very grateful," said Polo. "He began to show up more regularly for appointments."

This creative solution to a patient's care plan earned Polo a Daisy Award in May. She credited and thanked her colleagues when accepting the award. "This is the kind of thing our team does all the time in terms of coming up with ideas to help people overcome the barriers they encounter," said Polo. "This is a hallmark of our team's collaboration to make health care easier and accessible for everyone."

AT PENN MEDICINE, WE ALL ASPIRE TO BE DIFFERENCE MAKERS WHO REPRESENT THE PENN MEDICINE EXPERIENCE (PMX) IN ACTION.

EVERY DAY, OUR PENN MEDICINE COLLEAGUES ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF PATIENTS, FAMILIES, AND ONE ANOTHER. FROM INFORMATION SERVICES TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND ALL ROLES IN BETWEEN, EVERY STAFF MEMBER PLAYS A PART IN DELIVERING THE BEST POSSIBLE PENN MEDICINE EXPERIENCE. DO YOU HAVE A COLLEAGUE YOU'D LIKE TO SPOTLIGHT AS A DIFFERENCE MAKER? EMAIL EMPLOYEESTORIES@PENN.MEDICINE.UPENN.EDU.



Diverting 1,000 Pounds of Food Waste Every Week, and Counting!



In the restaurant at Penn Medicine Princeton Medical Center (PMC), staff members and visitors end their meal by placing trays stacked with plates, utensils, uneaten food, drink bottles, and more onto a conveyor belt that slowly carries them out of sight.

It's no disappearing trick, but there is still a lot more going on than meets the eye. Where trays emerge on the other side of the wall, two kitchen staff members are waiting to sort the waste into three color-coded bins: **gray** for landfill-bound items, **blue** for recyclables, and **green** for food remnants. One floor below, in the hospital's main kitchen, is a similar worksite set up to sort waste from the food prep area and trays that are brought back from patient rooms.

This is all part of a new food waste collection initiative at PMC which began this spring. The waste is trucked to a nearby farm that uses it as feed for livestock or grinds it into mulch.

PMC collected 1.5 tons of food waste in the first three weeks of the program, said **Greg Evans**, Penn Medicine's corporate director of sustainability. At that rate, PMC would collect 26 tons over a full year. That amounts to 52,000 pounds of food waste—a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions—diverted from the landfill by a single hospital. Evans said he hopes to introduce food waste collection at other Penn Medicine locations as well.

Food waste collection is one of the newest sustainability efforts at Princeton Health, which was recently recognized by Practice Greenhealth, a nonprofit membership organization promoting environmental stewardship and best practices in the health care. In May, Princeton Health received Practice Greenhealth's Partner for Change Award for the second year in a row. Evans said the award—presented to just 216 health care organizations nationwide—reflects Princeton Health's progress related to ongoing sustainability initiatives.



For instance, in 2022, Princeton Health more than doubled its collection and reprocessing of single-use medical devices, such as pulse oximeters, leads and cables, and various surgical supplies. PMC and its ambulatory surgery centers continued to ban the use of the anesthetic desflurane, a particularly harmful greenhouse gas.

Princeton Health also completed an energy audit of the hospital campus that sparked initiatives to dramatically decrease carbon emissions. The initiatives are expected to kick off later this summer, Evans said.



Another ongoing initiative is the introduction of SAO—or stabilized aqueous ozone—cleaning technology, which adds oxygen to tap water to create a solution that is an effective cleanser and sanitizer yet contains no harmful chemicals. **Larry Garcia**, director, Environmental Services, said the department is using the SAO solution in the atrium and other public areas of PMC while seeking Infection Control Committee approval to use it throughout the hospital. Evans said the goal is to increase the use of SAO at all Princeton Health locations before expanding to other entities across Penn Medicine.

One initiative that has already extended across other Penn Medicine entities is the measurement of carbon emissions to calculate a total for the entire University of Pennsylvania Health System. The figure will be tracked over time as Penn Medicine develops a multiyear strategy to reduce emissions and meet systemwide sustainability goals.



GOOD HEALTH & WEALTH FOR THE COMMUNITY

On Friday, June 30, the Penn Medicine Department of Neurology's Inclusion, Diversity, Anti-Racism and Equity (IDARE) committee partnered with the Wharton School of Business to host a Wellness Summit and Financial Literacy Event in honor of Juneteenth. Held at Saunders Park in West Philadelphia, the outdoor event was open to all area residents, and included free health screenings for cognition, mental health, and blood pressure, as well as CPR and Narcan trainings, a mobile vaccine unit to administer booster shots, and financial literacy training and guidance from Wharton School community partners. More than 40 Penn Medicine CAREs volunteers were on site to provide these services to West Philly residents. University of Pennsylvania Health System CEO **Kevin B. Mahoney** opened the event with remarks reaffirming Penn's commitment to health equity and the local communities served by Penn Medicine.



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System News is published monthly for Penn Medicine employees. Access System News online at PennMedicine.org/SystemNews.