Impact of a Specialty Infusion Pharmacy–Led Patient Navigation Program on Social Determinants of Health

Authors:

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Background:

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are non-medical factors influencing up to 80% of health outcomes. They fall into five categories: economic stability; education ccess/quality; healthcare access/quality; neighborhood/built environment; and social/community context. Patient navigation is defined as individualized assistance to patients, families, and caregivers to overcome system barriers and ensure timely access to quality medical and psychosocial care.

In 2022, LUX Infusion formalized a program to address SDOH for bleeding disorder patients in the context of infusion pharmacy. Common non-clinical barriers and resolution pathways were identified. A process was developed allowing staff, individual patients, and prescribers to refer to the program. The program is provided at no cost to the patient and is available regardless of pharmacy or product affiliation.

Three full-time patient navigators are supported by a multidisciplinary team with expertise in social services, intake/billing, and peer support. Navigators work directly with individual patients/caregivers, nonprofit agencies, insurance companies, case managers, and pharmacy staff until case resolution or discharge. All cases are tracked from initial referral through resolution and outcome.

Objective:

To evaluate outcomes of a specialty infusion pharmacy–led patient navigation program addressing SDOH.

Methods:

This 12-month retrospective study reviewed 347 navigation cases from 01/01/2025–12/31/2025. Primary SDOH barriers were categorized, and cases were classified as resolved, discharged, or in progress. Outcomes were documented at closure by the navigator and reviewed by clinical and operations teams.

Barriers:

Of the five SDOH categories, 77% of cases addressed healthcare access/quality; 46% addressed economic stability.Primary barriers were grouped into 8 categories:

Healthcare Access/Quality
77%

Economic Stability
46%

Category	Cases	Percentage
Healthcare Enrollment Support	146	42%
Premium/Copay Assistance	97	28%
Emergency Financial Assistance	46	13%
Medicare/Medicaid Issues	14	4%
Accommodation Plans	11	4%
SSI/SSDI	7	2%
Commercial Insurance issues	4	1%
Other	22	6%

Outcomes:

Outcomes were grouped into four categories: Reduced Financial Burden (216, 50%), Gained Access to Care (111, 25%), Secured New Health Coverage (57, 13%), and Maintained Existing Coverage (52, 12%). Individual cases included multiple outcomes due to the nature of support provided.

A three-question survey was sent to all patients post case closure. Twenty individuals responded; 100% of respondents indicated the barrier was addressed. Fourteen (70%) of respondents were new to the patient navigation program; 30% of respondents (6) were returning patients. Of the 20 respondents, 94% indicated they would recommend the program.

Conclusions:

Patient navigation can address SDOH and non-clinical barriers to care. This study demonstrates patient navigation improves healthcare access/quality and economic stability. Specialty pharmacies should consider structured, SDOH focused navigation programs to improve patient satisfaction and outcomes.