

Newsroom

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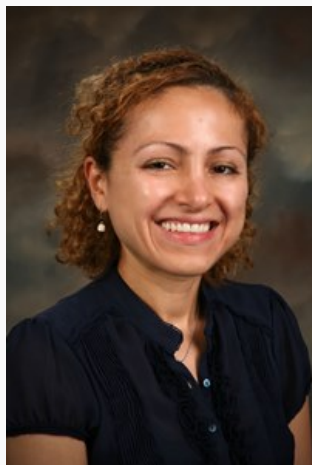
Georgia Southern University Researcher Finds Healthcare Navigators Cost Effective for Breast Cancer Patients

OCTOBER 14, 2010

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A Georgia Southern University researcher has found that pairing breast cancer patients with a professional to help them navigate their way through the health care process may not only save lives, but also has potential for saving substantial amounts of money in the health care system.

Georgia Southern University Professor Talar Markossian, along with Professor Elizabeth Calhoun from the University of Illinois at Chicago, conducted the research as part of the Chicago Cancer Navigation Project (CCNP) for which professor Calhoun is the principal investigator. CCNP's goal is to reduce the time between an abnormal screening result, like a mammogram, and a definitive diagnosis. Markossian and Calhoun's research shows that navigating patients through the health care system has potential for increasing one year in the life of a breast cancer patient at a cost of \$95,000 per patient, per year.

"The results of this research are very clear," Markossian explained. "If left undetected and untreated, breast cancer develops into more advanced stages, and hence, it becomes more costly to treat the disease and the chances of surviving the disease decreases. Also, the chain of events that begin with an abnormal result on a cancer screening can be overwhelming for a patient in many different ways. Providing patients with access to a health care professional who can help them navigate their way through the maze of doctors, tests, treatments and financial paperwork can save the life of a breast cancer patient at a comparatively reasonable price. So, this study shows bringing a health care professional on board to navigate for a patient is cost-effective."

Markossian, who is a faculty member in Georgia Southern University's Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, explained that health care navigators help patients with a variety of hurdles they may face after they receive an abnormal result on a cancer screen. The navigators do everything from making sure that a patient's proper medical and test information is on hand for doctor's visits to helping the patient find financial support and coordinate follow-up visits with physicians.

The study's findings were published in a recent edition of The Health Policy Journal.

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