

Elevating Patient and Employee Voices in Oncology Social Work: The Impact of Advisory Councils in Community Oncology

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Background

Abstract

This abstract explores how Texas Oncology’s Patient & Family Advisory Council (PFAC) and Patient & Employee Experience Council (PEEC) actively involve patients, families, and staff in decision-making processes. By integrating their input, these councils promote collaboration and drive improvements in cancer care delivery, particularly within oncology social work. The councils serve as platforms for feedback, leading to enhanced communication, policy changes, and patient-centered care initiatives.

Issue

The issue addressed is the gap between institutional decision-making and the lived experiences of oncology patients and staff. The population includes adult cancer patients, caregivers, and employees who are also patients. The intervention involves the creation and facilitation of PFAC and PEEC, which provide structured feedback loops and advisory input on care practices, digital health tools, ancillary services, and patient navigation.

METHODS

Creation of PFAC

The main goal is to show how advisory councils can improve psychosocial oncology services by integrating patient and staff feedback into clinical practice, policy, and quality improvement. Additional aims include enhancing communication, supporting trauma-informed care, and promoting equitable access, especially for those facing health care disparities who may contribute unique perspectives (Oldfield et al., 2019).

Implementation

Recruitment

- Recruited members via staff nominations
- Members met monthly to discuss barriers to care
- Served as focus groups for reviewing new initiatives (Lewis, 2023).

Function

Councils drove policy updates such as:

- adding Financial Counselors
- revamping patient education,
- forming a social work advocacy committee,
- providing training for revenue staff.

CONCLUSIONS

Patient Engagement

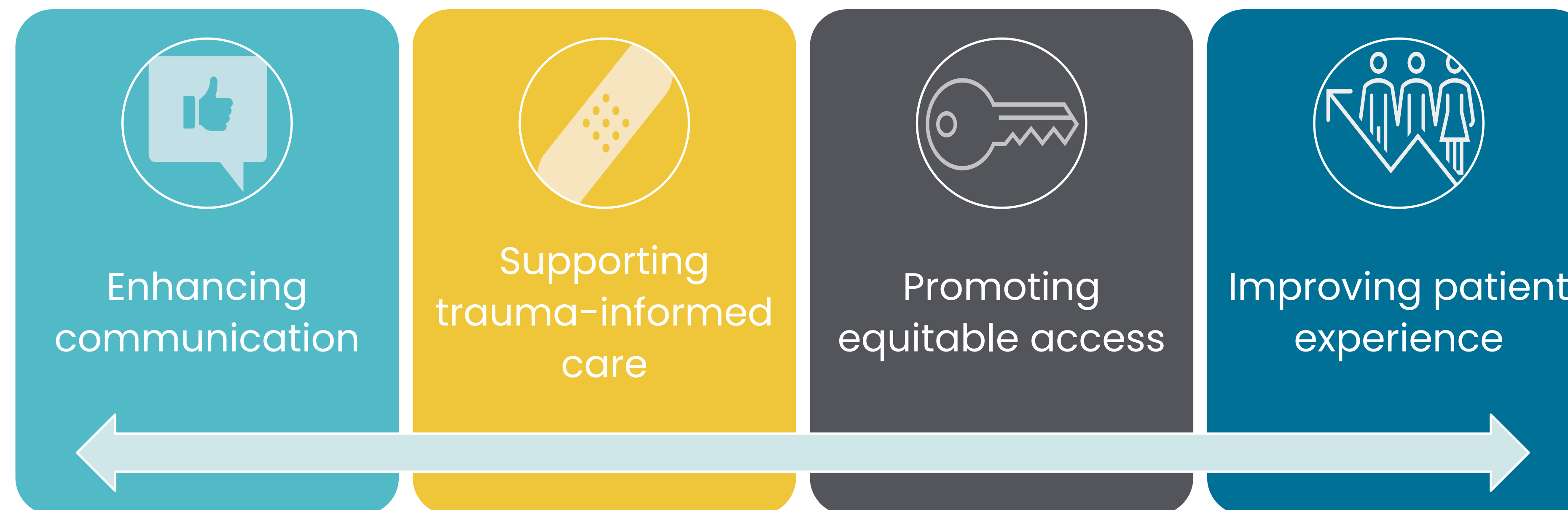
- Supports better decision-making, behavior change, improved outcomes, reduced costs, and higher satisfaction (Tolotti et al., 2022).

Advisory Councils

- Incorporate patient and staff input, leading to gains in satisfaction, engagement, and care coordination.

Quantifying Impact

- Remains a huge challenge
 - Patients question extent of influence
 - Focus on systemic evaluation of patient needs and service gaps is necessary



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