**Project: Education and Screening for Head and Neck Cancer in Urban Community Care Center**

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**Background:**

Despite Cleveland, Ohio being a mid-sized city with a plethora of health care systems, the city and Cuyahoga County are often highlighted for the astonishing health care disparities present in the community. For example, life expectancy varies up to 23 years (65.4 years vs 88 years) between two groups of residents living just 2 miles from each other. Additionally, the latest 2021 US Census data estimates that 8.8% of residents under age 65 are uninsured and 32.7% of the population lives in poverty. Unsurprisingly, this data extends to disparities in overall cancer outcomes in Cleveland with cancer being the 2nd leading cause of death in the county and 1.5x higher than the national benchmark.

Cancer screening has helped improve overall outcomes for many malignancies (i.e. breast, skin, lung), however Head and Neck (H&N) malignancies continue to lack an easy, accessible, and validated screening tool and early identification relies on physical exam. In communities such as ours with great disparity in health care outcomes in part due to accessibility, screening and outreach are a challenge. In the COVID era, with many patients avoiding care and providers deferring oral or mucosal exams, there is likely a growing population of patients with un-identified H&N malignancy.

The Centers Ohio is a well-established and respected non-for-profit organization based in Cleveland, Ohio that focuses on providing multiple facets of community outreach to the underserved and underinsured population. From their inception 50 years ago, they have now grown to encompass family support, housing resources, job training, transportation, in addition to their focus on providing healthcare access to the community. As they continue to expand, they have a strong infrastructure for health care delivery with five clinic locations in the greater Cleveland region.

**Proposal:**

We have identified The Centers Ohio as an optimal organization to collaborate with for a unique engagement opportunity for education and screening for H&N cancer in the urban underserved setting. The intent of this proposal, discussed below, encompasses education to both providers and patients as a foundation to lead screening and evaluation clinics for patients.

The education component will be two-fold aimed at providers within The Centers Ohio and community members. Residents and providers from the University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center Otolaryngology team will lead a 1-hour grand rounds to the primary care team at The Centers Ohio focusing on the high-risk H&N cancer population, important risk factors for close screening, performing a thorough exam, and common presentations of H&N malignancy. This will be during a monthly education platform within the organization. This lecture will be recorded and available to their organization as continuing education so it may be utilized with future groups and disseminated as needed. This education platform will also serve as a launching platform for the primary care providers within The Centers to then identify any potential high-risk patients who may benefit from closer H&N screening and evaluation by our specialty services. Our team is scheduled to deliver this talk on Thursday, April 21, 2022.

Furthermore, the Centers Ohio has a strong network within community centers throughout the city (i.e. recreation centers, churches, support groups). An outreach flyer will be disseminated to churches and community center leaders who may be privy to patients who are high-risk and would benefit from screening.

These high-risk patients identified by the Centers Ohio team and community leaders will be scheduled into one of three H&N screening clinics run by our residents and surgeons at The Centers clinical facility. Clinics are estimated to run four hours in length and we anticipate to have capability to screen a maximum of 16 patients in each clinic. Our team will screen and evaluate these patients on a volunteer basis and the patient’s will remain under the services of the Centers. The full use of funds from this grant ($1000) will be utilized to pay a rental fee for utilization of clinic space on at least three separate occasions in the upcoming months and to cover costs of the use of disposable flexible fiberoptic laryngoscopes that may be utilized during these clinics to provide one-stop comprehensive care. Providers from the Centers Ohio will be encouraged to join us in clinics for in-person hands on experience for evaluating these high-risk patients.

Our goals for this collaboration are multi-fold. Most importantly, we hope by establishing this specialty clinic for screening and evaluation of H&N malignancy, we can identify high-risk patients early and plug them into appropriate care resources for treatment sooner. Furthermore, we hope to increase awareness within the underserved population by bringing care directly to a venue that is accessible and familiar. Finally, given the Centers Ohio flagship location is in close proximity to our main tertiary care hospital, we hope to develop a strong professional relationship to keep open access between our teams of providers to improve patient access to specialty care when needed.