2022 AHNS Cancer Prevention Community Service Awards

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Despite the ever adapting massive social media network, medical engagement in social media remains lacking particularly for the head and neck cancer community.1–3 Community awareness of head and neck cancer remains low and in turn patient support following diagnosis remains inadequate. A recent study revealed that there are in fact a number of social media accounts discussing head and neck cancer, with only 19% of accounts generated from medical professionals. This highlights not only a large potential for the spread of misinformation, but also a huge opportunity for improvement from the head and neck oncology treatment community.

Our team will be partnering with Telesofia Medical to provide an interactive platform for oral head and neck cancer patients. Telesofia has previously initiated personalized videos for administration of chemotherapy for gastric malignancies providing a framework upon which we will build upon. The head and neck oncology pilot program will provide patients with (1) personalized videos to support their journey through oncologic cancer whether their treatment modality be surgery, systemic therapy, and/or radiation (2) connection to curated community support forums, and (3) pointed communicated with their respective medical providers. This program will be piloted at MD Anderson Cancer Center via the Head and Neck Surgical Oncology Department. The targeted population is patients beginning and undergoing treatment for oral head and neck malignancies. Once identified, patients will be offered enrollment in this program which will provide direct delivery of personalized videos pertaining to their treatment. Video topics will be decided upon by focus groups from patients who have already undergone treatment and identify gaps in their knowledge that they hope to help fill for future patients. These patient volunteers will speak directly through these videos when appropriate, with other videos including contents for physicians and speech pathologists when appropriate. This direct patient involvement will allow those with new diagnoses to place a real face to their upcoming treatment which is particularly important in the head and neck cancer community whose treatment can often be disfiguring or highly technical.

Paired with these videos, patient forums discussing these topics in more depth and addressing questions will be provided. Lastly, as patients undergo treatment, new topic videos will be provided. With these videos, patient symptom questionnaires will be provided and sent back to healthcare providers. In particular for the oral head and neck cancer community, these questionnaires will focus on dysphagia, xerostomia, oral intake, mucositis, airway status, and depression.4–11 This input format will enable providers to have pointed information about patient experiences and allow interventions to improve patient outcomes.

We expect that this pilot program will provide patients and their caregivers with a wealth of supportive information and communication tools to facilitate as much ease in treatment as possible. Furthermore, with strengthened patient education about their malignant diagnoses, patients will be empowered with the knowledge to aid in community advocacy for cancer prevention, early detection, and adherence to therapy. In addition, we expect. That this intervention will strengthen patient-physician communication and thereby provide time points for intervention when problematic symptoms arise thus preventing the progression of poor patient outcomes. With success from this pilot program, expansion of personalized medical videos paired with pointed communicated with medical providers will provide a new form of medical social media. The costs of this pilot project will stem from video production and technical support, estimated at 10,000 for pilot program initiation. Further funding will be departmental in nature from research funds as possible. We thank you for your consideration and aim to further the goals of AHNS with this project.

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