

Ben Taub General Hospital is a safety-net hospital within the Harris Health System that provides comprehensive care to underinsured and uninsured patients in Harris County, Texas. Nearly half of patients accessing care through the Harris Health system are uninsured, and an additional 20% receive Medicaid/CHIP benefits. The patient population is linguistically and culturally diverse; over 50% of patients identify as Hispanic/Latino, and a substantial proportion are primarily Spanish-speaking. Many others speak Vietnamese or other languages as their primary means of communication.

The Ben Taub Department of Otolaryngology sees approximately 50 new head and neck cancer patients annually and provides longitudinal care for many more undergoing active treatment or surveillance. Receiving a cancer diagnosis is inherently complex and emotionally overwhelming. For patients navigating this process in a health care system that does not operate in their primary language, the challenges are compounded by communication barriers, fragmented information, and uncertainty regarding logistics, insurance, and follow-up care. These factors contribute to delays in care, missed appointments, and increased anxiety for patients and their families.

To address these barriers, we propose the development of comprehensive, professionally translated patient education handouts designed specifically for individuals diagnosed with head and neck cancer at Ben Taub. These documents would provide clear, accessible information about the diagnosis and a structured, step-by-step outline of the anticipated diagnostic workup and treatment course. Importantly, they would also serve to centralize essential contact information to facilitate communication across multidisciplinary teams.

These handouts would include the following sections:

1. **Overview of Head and Neck Cancer:** A brief introduction to head and neck cancer and common risk factors including tobacco and alcohol use as well as available tobacco cessation resources
2. **Insurance and Financial Resources:** Guidance on applying for Harris Health financial assistance (e.g. Gold Card/indigent status), clarification of in- versus out-of-network marketplace insurance plans, and contact information for financial counseling services
3. **Diagnostic Workup:** An outline of anticipated laboratory studies, imaging, and biopsies, accompanied by a checklist to track progress
4. **Cancer Staging:** A simplified explanation of staging and how it guides treatment recommendations
5. **Treatment Modalities:** A high-level overview of different treatment modalities including surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy including general timelines, potential side effects, and expectations during treatment

6. Adjuvant Radiation Timing: A discussion regarding the time sensitive nature of adjuvant radiation and teams involved (e.g. Radiation oncology, oral and maxillofacial surgery)
7. Post-treatment Surveillance: A description of the standard follow-up intervals, imaging schedules, and long-term monitoring
8. Multidisciplinary Care Team Contacts: Direct contact information for ENT, Medical Oncology, Radiation Oncology, Speech and Language Pathology, Nutrition, and Case Management.

To ensure accessibility, the handouts would be professionally translated into both Spanish and Vietnamese, the two most common non-English languages spoken by patients at Ben Taub.

The overarching goal of this initiative is to promote health equity by improving patient understanding, engagement, and continuity of care. By providing clear, linguistically appropriate educational materials, we aim to empower patients to feel informed, supported, and confident as they navigate their cancer treatment regardless of their primary language.

Funds from this grant would go towards professional translation and printing of informational handouts. Professional translation of a five-page document into Spanish and Vietnamese is estimated to cost \$350. Document printing would cost \$0.26 per page for a total of \$1.3 per packet. After translation, \$650 will remain. This would be used to print up to 500 copies.