

Oncologist factors that influence referrals to subspecialty palliative care clinics

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Appendix
Interview Guide

Introduction

My name is _____. Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in this study. I want to ask you a few questions about your experiences with **outpatient** palliative care services.

[Phone] I want to confirm that you are talking from a private location, appropriate for sharing confidential information.

I want to remind you that while your responses to these questions will be completely confidential, we request that you refrain from using identifiable information about your patients.

As you recall, you gave us permission to audio-record this conversation. The interview should take 15-20 minutes.

State **ID & DATE** at start of recording

Experience

1. Have you ever referred a patient to a subspecialty palliative care clinic?

“Cancer Pain & Supportive Care” - UPMC
“Symptom Management Service” - UCSF
“Hertzberg Palliative Care Clinic” - MtSinai

(If yes): I would like you to think about a patient in your clinic that you have referred to outpatient palliative care.

- Can you tell me a little bit about this patient and their family?
- Tell me about how you decided to refer this patient to palliative

care.

Probes:

- Can you walk me through how you made this decision?
- What made you refer when you did, rather than earlier or later?
- Was the decision to refer this patient easy or difficult for you?
(practical/logistical factors, personal factors...)
- How did you negotiate this decision with this patient and his/her

family?

How did this patient and their family respond to this referral?

(If no...)

2. I would like you to think about a (another) patient in your clinic with advanced cancer that you have not referred to outpatient palliative care. Please think about a patient who has active symptoms and limited treatment options.

-- Can you tell me a little bit about this patient and their family?

-- Did you consider referring this patient to palliative care?

(If NO) --Tell me more about WHY you didn't consider

referring...

Probes:

-- Can you walk me through how you made this decision?

Tell me more...

-- What factors played into your decision?

-- Did you find it easy or difficult to make this decision? Why?

Hypothetical

3. I'd like to ask you a couple questions about a hypothetical patient in your clinic. Mrs. Smith is 65 years old and she has recently been diagnosed with metastatic pancreatic cancer after presenting to her primary care physician with abdominal pain.

-- Tell me about how you would decide whether to refer Mrs. Smith to subspecialty palliative care clinic.

-- Is that something that would influence your decision (to refer Mrs. Smith to palliative care)?

Probes:

-- What (else) would make you more likely to refer Mrs. Smith to subspecialty palliative care?

-- What (else) would make you less likely to refer Mrs. Smith?

4. I want to ask you about the role any of the following factors might play in your decision whether to refer Mrs. Smith to palliative care clinic:

Some people say that...

A. Practical factors (like copays, when the docs are there, where the clinic is located)

B. Practice norms at this institution (how other doctors do it)

C. Relationships with palliative care doctors

D. Organizational policy or written protocols

... play a role in their decisions to refer patients to palliative care, what do you think?

5. In general, do you think you would be more or less likely than your colleagues to refer Mrs. Smith to palliative care clinic?
-- Tell me more about that.

6. Do you have any concerns about palliative care services in general?

Probes:

-- Have you had any bad experiences with palliative care?
-- Are there things you worry about, regarding palliative care and your patients?

7. Is there anything I *didn't* ask about palliative/supportive care that you think we should know?
-- Tell me more.

Thank you!