



Professional Patient Navigation Code of Ethics

The Patient-Centered Education & Research Institute (PCERI) believes that adhering to a strong code of ethics is an essential condition of professionalism. Patient Navigation Professionals (PNP) are expected to follow these ethical standards and behaviors while serving in patient navigation roles.

PCERI is an organization of trained navigation professionals and educators that ensures that those who serve in this important field are competent and exhibit the emotional intelligence to help people find their way through the healthcare maze. PCERI believes that patient navigation professionals are an important player in growing patient-centered, evidence-based healthcare.

A PNP may work in a variety of healthcare settings including working as an independent patient advocate. He or she may have additional professional certifications and licensure in health and/or behavioral sciences or in specialty areas of patient navigation. Patient Navigation "Professionals" practice ethically and demonstrate the competencies needed to help clients.

A PNP assists clients with receiving appropriate care, education, and resources needed to improve health outcomes. They assist patients, use available options and resources, and maximize patient access to relevant information in line with an individual's personal and cultural values and preferences.

Healthcare navigation does not include directly imposing specific treatment choices, providing clinical second opinions; or direct, hands-on medical care of any type. The role of the PNP is to enable patients and their caregivers to understand their choices and access resources. Their focus is on the patient and improving health outcomes.

The following are ethical principles developed by the National Association of Healthcare Advocacy Consultants (NAHAC) and adapted by PCERI to meet ethical expectations of patient navigation professionals.

Guiding Principle 1: Transparency and Honest Disclosure

PNPs are committed to integrity and total transparency in the conduct of their practices. The PNP has an obligation to be transparent about fees, training, education, experience, and credentials. The PNP must disclose any contractual relationships that may exist between the PNP and other services they might use to assist their clients. PNPs have a special responsibility to ensure that clients are fully aware of all possible conflicts of interest influenced by the navigator's conditions of employment. PNPs providing fee-for-service assistance are obligated to present a client or responsible family member with a formal "Agreement" that clearly defines their PNP scope of practice, fee schedule, and working arrangements.

Guiding Principle 2: Protecting Confidentiality and Privacy

PNPs respect each client's right to privacy and abide by all relevant laws and regulations relating to confidentiality of personal information. PNPs shall at all times safeguard and protect the confidentiality of all medical records and communications with clients.

Principle 3: Fostering Autonomy

PNPs treat all clients with compassion and respect. Foremost will be their clients' personal values concerning care and the right to be involved in all decisions that affect their care. PNPs uphold and respect all patients' rights by

promoting recognition of existing statutory rights and supporting development of potential advancements of the rights of people and communities to receive fair treatment.

PNPs are dedicated to promoting the autonomy and empowerment of their clients to exercise meaningful informed consent. PNPs will provide clients with information that would facilitate informed decision-making. PNPs respect the dignity and freedom of each client to make his or her own decisions grounded in the cultural, spiritual, and ethical context of that individual.

The PNP's role is to ensure that the client's wishes, if known, are the guiding force behind decisions on medical care. While a PNP may not serve as a health care proxy or other such surrogate decision-maker for a current client, the PNP may continue to serve his/her client's interests by briefing the surrogate on any relevant statutory patients' rights and possible care options.

Guiding Principle 4: Provision of Competent Services

PNPs have a responsibility to inform clients of their specific areas of proficiency, and only to advise clients within that area where the PNP has demonstrated expertise. If a client needs assistance in an area where the PNP does not have sufficient knowledge or training, the PNP is obligated to refer the client to the appropriate system or resource for assistance.

PNPs are committed to continuing their education in order to keep their knowledge and skills current. PNPs ensure that they have adequate referral systems in place to assist clients who need services the PNP is unable to provide.

Guiding Principle 5: Avoidance of Impropriety and Maintenance of Professional Boundaries

PNPs may not accept remuneration for making referrals to other providers or services, nor steer clients to products or services from which the PNP will profit financially or earn a commission. PNPs may not accept paid advertising on their websites from outside product or service providers. PNPs do not participate in dual relationships with their clients. PNPs recognize and maintain boundaries that establish appropriate limits to professional relationships.

Guiding Principle 6: Avoidance of Discriminatory Practices

Essential to Professional Patient Navigation is the belief that equal access to appropriate healthcare and treatment is the right of each individual. PNPs are committed to strive for equal access without regard to age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. PNPs are committed to assisting clients of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds. PNPs are mindful of the cultural context of clients, respecting their individual perspectives, and employing effective cross-cultural communication techniques.

Guiding Principle 7: Continued Learning

PNPs are committed to continual learning to hone professional expertise and maintain knowledge of current conditions in a rapidly changing healthcare environment. PNPs seek and apply skills and techniques that improve patient-centered navigation.

Guiding Principle 8: Research

As a professional in a healthcare role, PNPs collect relevant data about patient treatment and outcomes and regularly formulate and conduct studies to improve outcomes for future patients. PNPs share and coordinate these studies with appropriate healthcare teams. When appropriate, PNP's share findings with the professional community of patient navigators to further develop evidence-based practice.

Source: National Association of Healthcare Advocacy Consultants, 2016, <http://nahac.memberlodge.com/>

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