

Navigator's Role Along the Lung Cancer Patient Journey

As navigators caring for a patient diagnosed with lung cancer, you will find their journey may not be a straight path but instead, the journey for lung cancer patients involves...detours, periods where your patient may wait for new directions, even moments when your patients may have to back up and start again. Nurse and patient navigators working within the multidisciplinary team support patients with lung cancer and their families by offering key support along this path. The following roadmap describes the lung cancer patient journey.

ROADMAP KEY



The road signs describe the roles and actions a navigator will take along the way for patients.



The directional signs describe the clinical milestones in the lung cancer patient's journey.



Navigators ensure PCPs know about their patient's participation in screening or nodule identification.^{9,10}

START



Early Lung Cancer Detection and Intervention: Low-Dose Computed Tomography (LDCT) Lung Screening and Incidental Findings

- Conduct community outreach to at-risk patient populations¹
- Perform screening and culturally competent community outreach/education to healthcare providers via social media campaigns and advocacy groups²
- Offer education on new updated USPSTF criteria, what LDCT screening entails to encourage patients to get screened¹³⁻⁷
- Create lung screening and incidental nodule management programs and protocols with emphasis on shared decision-making⁸



Suspicious Finding

- Complete diagnostic workup, genomics, IPN risk stratification^{11,12}
- Review incidental finding at multidisciplinary tumor review board via interventional pulmonary, thoracic surgery, radiology¹⁰



Diagnosis and Staging

- Perform labs, pulmonary function tests, imaging tests (ie, x-ray, CT, PET, or MRI)
- Determine tumor stage based on tumor size, lymph node involvement, and tumor metastasis¹³
- Perform biopsy to determine lung cancer type and subtype¹⁴⁻¹⁶
 - Analysis of molecular driver mutations across all stages¹⁷
 - Analysis of PD-L1¹⁷
 - Utilize standard biomarker testing practices
- Introduce rationale for re-biopsy, if necessary, or obtaining liquid biopsy for future testing¹⁷



Navigators help manage patients' and caregivers' anxiety while patients wait for screening results. Once a definitive diagnosis is confirmed, navigators can ensure appropriate follow-up occurs and begin to assess barriers to care.



Multidisciplinary Team Involvement/Treatment Planning

Once treatment begins, other healthcare professionals will join the patient's journey²⁰:

- Pulmonologist
- Thoracic surgeon
- PCP
- Medical oncologist
- Radiation oncologist
- Interventional pulmonologist
- Radiologist
- Nurse Navigator
- Pharmacist
- Community/Lay Navigator



BIOMARKER TESTING



Navigators may expedite the staging activities, help patients understand the rationale for biomarker testing, coordinate biomarker testing, and maintain communication with all stakeholders.^{18,19}



Depending on the treatment plan:


- Investigate potential clinical trials and patient eligibility
- Coordinate oncology specialist referrals
- Participate in multidisciplinary tumor boards¹⁰
- Advocate for shared decision-making with the patient
- Track key metrics, such as time from diagnosis to initial treatment²¹

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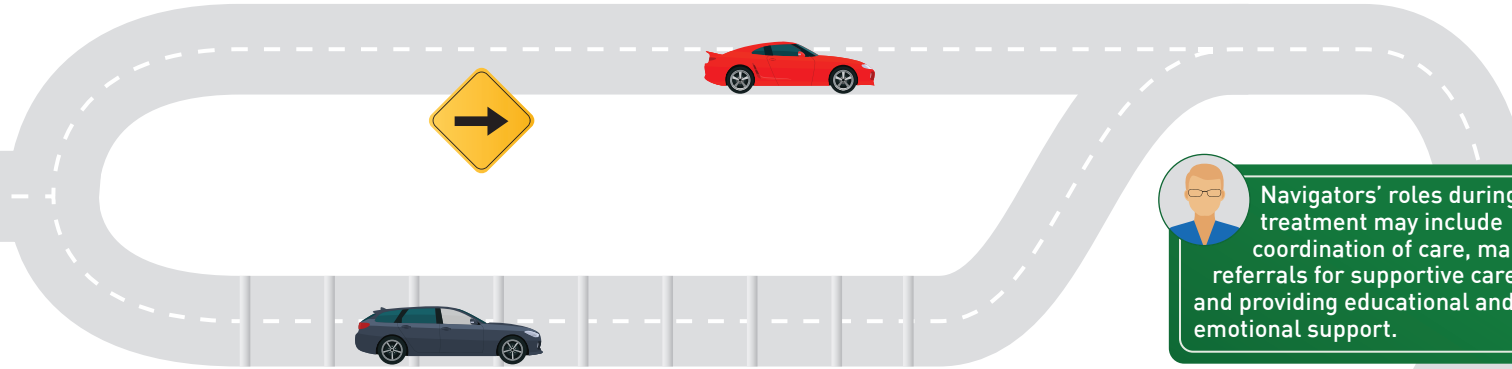

The LungAmbition Alliance

AONN Academy of Oncology Nurse & Patient Navigators


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During treatment planning, navigators help the patient evaluate their circumstances, assess potential barriers, and the impact treatment will have on the patient and their families.


Navigators' roles during treatment may include coordination of care, making referrals for supportive care, and providing educational and emotional support.




Navigators may conduct barrier assessment and distress screening to identify potential roadblocks to treatment adherence (such as financial issues, transportation, etc)²⁵⁻³⁰ and make early referral to local and national support services.

Supportive Care²⁴

- Financial Counselor/Social Worker
- Psychologist/mental health consult
- Nutrition/dietitian
- Palliative care pre-surgery, chemotherapy class, oral oncolytic
- Pre-habilitation and oncology rehabilitation
- Pulmonary rehabilitation/physical therapy
- Advocacy/nonprofit group resources



Throughout the recommended duration of therapy, navigators provide education and set expectations with the patient and caregivers about treatment side effects,²² continue to reinforce shared decision-making, and promote patient adherence to clinical protocols.²³



Side Effect Management and Adherence




Survivorship and End of Life

Survivorship:

- Survivorship care planning, education on latent side effects, post-therapy rehabilitation^{19,31}

End of Life:


- Advance Care Planning discussion and completion, hospice^{18,32,33}



Navigators coordinate survivorship care plan development and offer guidance on survivorship resources, educate on the differences between palliative care and hospice, and provide emotional support.

Monitoring Dependent on Disease Stage

- Management of symptoms and treatment side effects through the end of treatment¹⁸
- Additional imaging to evaluate recurrence, progression, and/or treatment response¹⁷
- Repeat biopsy and biomarker testing in case of tumor progression or recurrence¹⁷



Navigators educate on long-term side effects from treatment and reinforce the importance of future screening and testing.


CT, computerized tomography
IPN, incidental pulmonary nodule

MRI, magnetic resonance imaging
PCP, primary care provider
PD-L1, programmed death-ligand 1

PET, positron emission tomography
USPSTF, US Preventive Services Task Force

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At the end of the patient's journey, navigators encourage the patient to follow up with their PCP regarding overall health and encourage patient compliance with oncology and surgical specialists' future recommendations.¹⁷



Return to Primary Care Physician