

Background

- Health and Social community resources (CR) such as nutritional counseling, smoking cessation, self-management, and falls prevention can play an important role in supporting individuals to attain their health goals.
- These CR are underutilized because many people face barriers to access, including challenges navigating the system, transportation restrictions, language barriers, or other limitations related to their social context.
- Very little is known about whether a Patient Navigator program (where a person is tasked with helping connect patients to CR) integrated within primary care can help patients access resources they need and promote equity.

Objective

Assess the feasibility of a Patient Navigator program in primary care to increase patient utilization of CRs

Methods

Design:

Feasibility study (4 practices) receiving the intervention

Setting:

Ottawa, Ontario; Champlain Local Integrated Health Network

Tools:

- Survey: Patient Pre-intervention;
- Study documentation: Referral forms and navigator logs

Intervention:

- Practices/Providers received an orientation on existing CR, a standardized referral form to integrate referrals to CR into their routine practice, and a Patient Navigator to support patients access CR.
- Patients received a referral to a CR by their primary care provider (PCP) and services from a Patient Navigator to help them overcome barriers that can limit their access to CR.

Measures:

- Main: Rate of access to CR
- Secondary: Determinants of (non-)utilization (barriers, facilitators).

Results

- 68 patient referrals were received from participating Primary Care Practices (PCPs).
- 41 patients agreed to participate in the study.
 - 31 patients have met with the Patient Navigator.
 - 20 patients are currently being supported to access one or more CRs.
 - 11 patients have accessed the CR they were referred to.

Fig 1. Types of CR patients were referred to

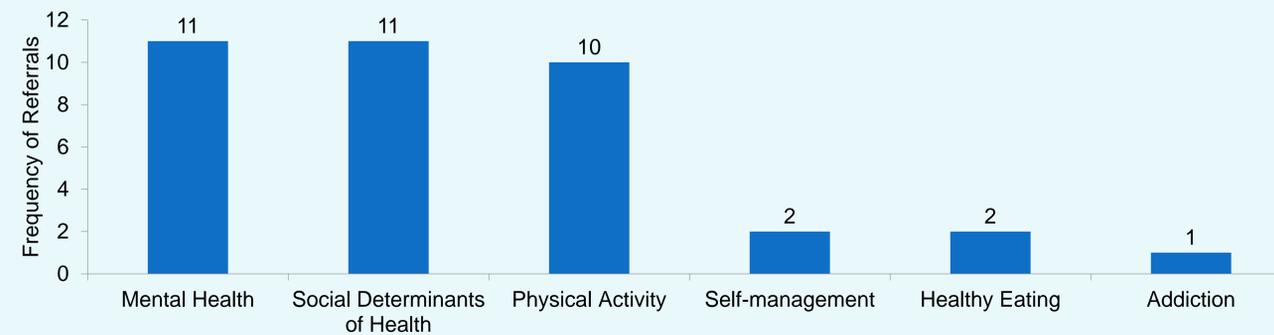


Fig 2. Common barriers limiting patients' access to CR

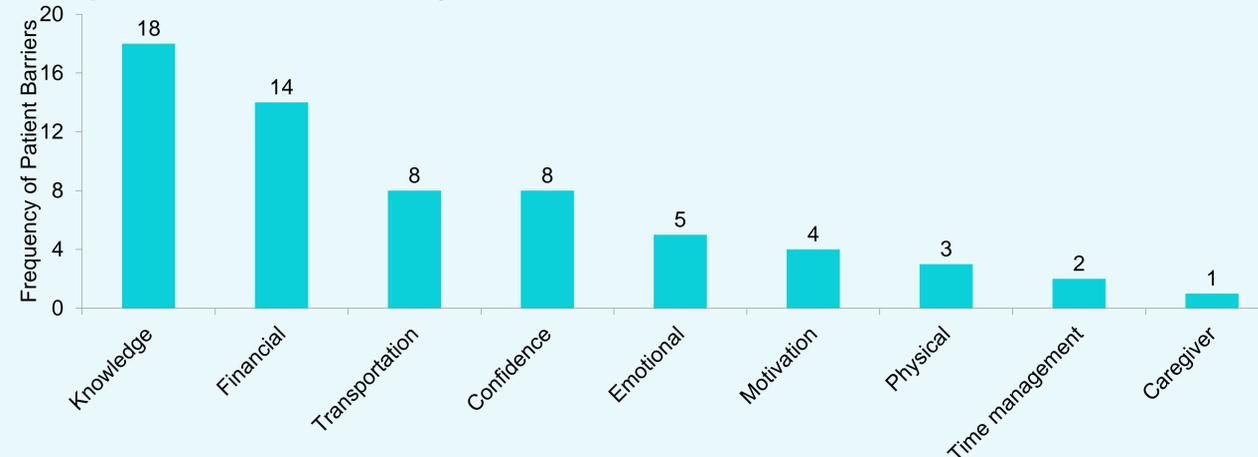
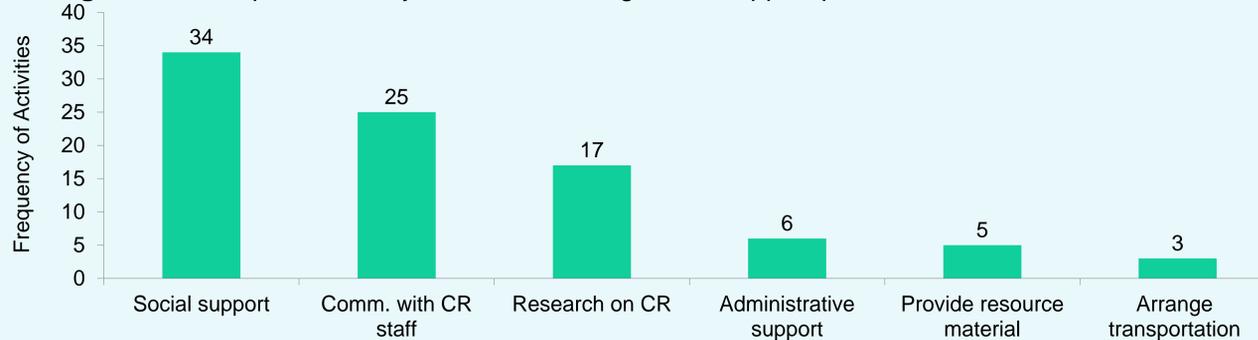


Fig 3. Activities performed by the Patient Navigator to support patients' access the CR



Patients' Experience



Discussion

- Participating patients that met with the Patient Navigator were most commonly referred to resources for **mental health**, **physical activity** and **other Social Determinants of Health** such as income and social status, social support networks, employment/working conditions, and physical environments.
- Lack of **knowledge** about existing CRs as well as **transportation** to these resources were identified as the most common barriers to access.
- 65% of patients reported two or more barriers to accessing CRs.
- Providing **social support** to patients and **communicating** with CR staff on behalf of the patient were the most common activities performed by the Patient Navigator to help patients access the CR.

Next Steps

- Implement a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the intervention in Ottawa and Sudbury, Ontario.
- Examine the impact of a Patient Navigator on French-speaking minority communities