



Patient Navigation Community Liaison

“You have cancer.” This year, approximately 4,900 Nova Scotians, from all walks of life and from all areas of the province, will hear these devastating words. This means, that each week, 94 Nova Scotians will hear this life-changing news. Some will be from the African Nova Scotian or aboriginal communities. Others may be immigrants or members of the gay and lesbian community. Regardless of our defining characteristics, it is essential that all Nova Scotians have equal access to quality cancer care.

Culture and life experiences define who we are and it is not surprising that our needs will vary accordingly. *Cancer Care Nova Scotia*, working with African Nova Scotian researchers, Winnie Benton and Sandra Loppie, learned about the African Nova Scotian experience in navigating the cancer system, and identified and recommended ways to enhance cancer care for African Nova Scotians. The research indicated a need for more culturally specific materials, a need for African Outreach Workers of a similar background, more health professionals with an understanding of cultural backgrounds and differences, and recognition of supports already available in the community. In an effort to meet the unique navigation needs of African Nova Scotians and other diverse communities, *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* created the role of Patient Navigation Community Liaison.

The Community Liaison works with diverse communities to:

- Identify their unique needs
- Develop strategies to meet these needs
- Establish and maintain a network of community leaders, volunteers, and professionals

The Community Liaison helps patients and families through the cancer system by:

- Introducing the Patient Navigator and explaining the navigator’s role
- Bringing individual needs to the attention of the appropriate Patient Navigator
- Educating Patient Navigators about the unique needs of diverse communities

The Community Liaison assists family physicians, surgeons, community based specialists, oncologists and other health professionals by:

- Promoting a better understanding of the values and beliefs of diverse communities
- Encouraging education in cultural sensitivity

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