Disparities in Breast Cancer and the Role of Patient Navigator Programs

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Despite advances in screening techniques and early detection modalities, breast cancer remains the most common malignancy affecting women in the United States. Therapeutic treatment options for breast malignancies vary in nature and are complex, with outcomes dependent on a plethora of variables. Lack of health insurance, racial disparities, limited access to medical care, socioeconomic status, underuse of available therapies, and inadequate follow-up are noted barriers to the diagnosis and treatment of patients with breast cancer. Patient navigation programs have shown a benefit in assisting these patients through screening, diagnosis, and treatment phases. This literature review will attempt to outline the obstacles associated with timely diagnosis and management of complex breast malignancies while highlighting the impact on professional practice.

Lack of Health Insurance and Access to Screening

Despite recommendations for annual breast screening mammography for women aged 40 years and older, lack of adherence...