Improving the Prostate Cancer Survivorship Care of Veterans
Career Development Award

Team Members:

Ted Skolarus
Anne Sales (primary mentor)
Sarah Hawley (mentor)
Tim Hofer (mentor)
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Funding:
September 2013– August 2017

Length of Study:
5 years

Anticipated Impacts on Veterans Health:
With over 200,000 survivors and 12,000 new diagnoses annually, the burden of prostate cancer among Veterans is substantial. Most men live with rather than die from this common disease making prostate cancer survivorship care especially important. The goals of this research program are to better understand Veteran prostate cancer survivorship care and improve its delivery using state-of-the-art implementation methods.

Project Background:
Because of its leadership in chronic disease care and the proportion of older men served, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is well positioned to become one of the national leaders in prostate cancer survivorship care. However, the quality of Veteran prostate cancer survivorship care is largely unknown. In addition, there is poor consensus about whether primary care providers or cancer specialists should have primary responsibility for ongoing cancer surveillance and management of treatment-related side effects. Ultimately, the design and implementation of tools to optimize prostate cancer survivorship care rests upon understanding how responsibility for survivorship care is managed and the barriers to good survivorship care.

Project Objective:
The objective of this series of research projects is to inform the development of an effective, scientific theory-based prostate cancer-specific intervention to improve the quality of prostate cancer survivorship care among primary care providers in the VA.

Study Design:
Project 1 will use national VA claims data linked to physician workforce data from 2005-2012 to assess the delivery of prostate cancer surveillance care and management of common treatment side effects according to physician specialty. For Project 2, we will use the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research to guide focus groups assessing referral patterns, attitudes, social norms, perceived behavioral control and intention to deliver high quality survivorship care among prostate cancer providers. We will also assess local structural and organizational contexts of the primary care-specialist interface for cancer care. This project will also create a theory-based survey to assess provider behavior as well as the success of future survivorship interventions. Based on our prior research, findings from Projects 1 and 2 and current Office of Specialty Care Transformation initiatives, we will develop a theory-based prostate cancer intervention during Year 3 and pilot its implementation across VISN 11 during Years 4 and 5.

Potential Impact
Due to the expanding population of Veteran prostate cancer survivors, improving their quality of survivorship care through effective use of the provider workforce is of the utmost importance. Our findings will inform models for cancer survivorship care across VHA and provide essential preliminary data for subsequent comparative effectiveness testing of interventions and implementation efforts to improve cancer care.