

CLINICAL NAVIGATOR



Navigator America Carrillo with Urology RN Zulema Gonzalez

The clinical navigator model is an increasingly popular and effective component of patient care. Navigators work with patients and families to help with many different needs associated with the health care system, and to improve compliance with following patients through diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship.

Typically, navigators are important, even primary points of contact with patients and their families to understand their care, prepare them for appointments, tests, and procedures, and thus contribute to quality of care and patient outcomes.

UI Urology's navigator, America Carrillo, provides all these services, and more. A registered nurse and UIC doctoral student in nursing practice who is training to be a nurse practitioner, Carrillo joined the navigation team last August.

Consistent with her clinical experience and professional goals, she is putting in place a program based on

research by UI Urology Drs. Michael Abern, Daniel Moreira, and others that found that a well-run navigation program has direct benefits in helping patients overcome barriers to cancer diagnosis and treatment (see related story), including helping to reduce cancer patient's missed clinic appointments.

"Helping reduce patients' stress and anxieties — talking them through the process around testing, biopsies, and other treatments — is so important," Carrillo said. "Giving people information and personal contact is critical, because there are so many possible conditions and ways of treating them, and we want people to be as comfortable as possible in a stressful situation."

One of Carrillo's key initiatives was to develop a quality improvement project to improve instructions provided to patients who are preparing for prostate biopsy. Carrillo has developed a prep kit that includes pretest antibiotics and an enema, along with detailed instructions for the procedure, said Dr. Abern.