

## BROADCAST-Navigators Help Cancer Patients Avoid 'Financial Toxicity'

Cancer is one of the most expensive diseases to treat in the United States.

A report for the [President's Cancer Panel](#) concluded innovative drugs offer new hope for patients to achieve long-term remissions—even cures—but virtually all new cancer drugs enter the market with a price tag that exceeds \$100,000 per year and, increasingly, much higher. More and more patients are taking these novel drugs for months or even years.

Tom Cox who directs OSF HealthCare Cancer Support Services at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria says one of the questions heard most often is, 'How am I going to pay for this?'

One study found patients with high copays were 70 percent more likely to discontinue treatment within six months.

### **SOT-Tom Cox, director of Cancer Support Services at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center**

Cox says financial insecurity among cancer patients can affect their overall sense of physical and emotional well-being and that's considered financial toxicity.

**“Where concerns over finances affect their response to treatment, whether they will even seek treatment, whether they will take their medications. Sometimes people do not because of the stress of worrying about how they're going to pay for treatment.” (:16)**

Even with insurance, facing cancer treatment costs can be daunting. One study found nearly half of all insured cancer patients bear a significant or catastrophic financial burden. Insurance broker and cancer patient Paul Barbary of Alton, featured in an [earlier OSF Newsroom story about immunotherapy](#), said he is so thankful he has great insurance because the cost of his treatments are as much as \$50,000 each. Barbary will speak at next weekend's American Cancer Society Relay for Life of the Riverbend. He's doing well both physically and financially but not all cancer patients are in that position.

Recognizing the daunting challenge of managing the cost for treatments, OSF HealthCare created the position of oncology financial navigator to let people with cancer will know they are not alone, that there are resources, and that they have help to find ways of paying for treatment.

Cox says financial navigation is only one part, but a critically important piece, of the support services OSF provides to cancer patients.

### **SOT-Tom Cox, director of Cancer Support Services at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center**

**“We offer things like psycho-social support and dietetics and navigation, cancer rehab ... that type of thing. But, often times with people, the big barrier from experience, seeing all of that support, is concerns about finances and that kind of takes over their life and we want to give them assistance to help them take that worry off of the plate.” (:19)**

The goal is to make sure patients get the best evidence-based treatment available and that financial concerns don't govern those decisions.

Peoria-based Financial Oncology Navigator Catherine Guebert has been helping other communities. Cox says everyone who needs support should ask.

### **SOT-Tom Cox, director of Cancer Support Services at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center**

**“It's a type of thing that can be done by Skype or over the phone. We have had our (oncology) financial navigator go to Ottawa for example. She is more than willing and able to assist in other areas.” (:12)**

Catherine Guebert works on optimizing health insurance coverage, sometimes switching patient's Medicare supplement plans. Guebert taps resources available through cancer-specific or community-specific foundations.

### **SOT-Financial Oncology Navigator Catherine Guebert**

**“OSF has financial assistance ... a very generous financial assistance and also the local and state and national resources we can pull all of that together and we relieve some financial burden.” (:14)**

Any patient navigator can help connect you with financial help.

## For web story

In addition they're there to help patients and families in a variety of other ways:

- Helping you and your family members navigate the comprehensive services available.
- Assessing the individual and personal needs of you and your family.
- Explaining the necessary information, education and resource materials you receive so you know what to expect throughout your treatment.
- Assisting with the coordination and scheduling of tests and services.
- Communicating with physicians, case managers, support service personnel, family members and others on your behalf.
- Supporting you and your family members by following up after your visit to talk about additional information and services available to you.
- Referring you to the appropriate physician office or other health care resource when clinic issues arise.

If you are concerned about the cost of cancer treatment for you or a loved one, reach out to anyone on your care team who can connect you with a financial oncology navigator and/or social worker to make sure you get the treatment you need.