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DEVELOPING NAVIGATION COMPETENCIES TO CARE FOR OLDER RURAL ADULTS WITH ADVANCED ILLNESS

ABSTRACT

Navigators help rural older adults with advanced illness and their families connect to needed resources, information, and people to improve their quality of life. This article describes the process used to engage experts - in rural aging, rural palliative care, and navigation - as well as rural community stakeholders to develop a conceptual definition of navigation and delineate navigation competencies for the care of this population. A discussion paper on the important considerations for navigation in this population was developed followed by a four-phased Delphi process with 30 expert panel members. Study results culminated in five general navigation competencies for health care providers caring for older rural persons and their families at end of life: provide patient/family screening; advocate for the patient/family; facilitate community connections; coordinate access to services and resources; and promote active engagement. Specific competencies were also developed. These competencies provide the foundation for research and curriculum development in navigation.

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