



2020 LEAD Capstone Poster Session

Allowing UT Southwestern to Be an International Destination for Medical Tourism

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Abstract

- UT Southwestern is renowned for its distinctive research and excellent clinical care. Its faculty is diverse and internationally recognized making the institution a highly sought reference for foreign patients. These international patients see UT Southwestern as a medical destination and wish to be treated here. Through lack of a dedicated effort, these patients end up going somewhere else.
- Through simple training of administration staff, in every department or division, we can provide adequate and swift information to international patients so as to facilitate their care taking place at UTSW.
- By allowing international patients to have a streamlined pathway for care at UTSW, this project could generate more revenue and visibility to the departments and institution and, also, enable for unexplored clinical and research collaborations.



Objectives

- To demonstrate the need for an international program at UT Southwestern
- To establish a simple plan to get the program started and make it work



Background Information

- Case example:
 - One of my best friends from medical school, in Brazil, called me a few years ago because his sister had just been diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. He wanted to bring her here for treatment at UT Southwestern. He was going to pay everything out of pocket and needed to know how much it was going to cost him. After almost 2 weeks of back and forth e-mails and phone calls between the departments and parts involved, UTSW was not able to provide him with any kind of numbers. He called MD Anderson Center and was given an answer in about two hours. In three days, his sister was in Houston to start treatment. We missed an opportunity here.
 - We were not able to do in two weeks what our competitor did in two hours. I refuse to accept that.
 - We have a problem. Many international patients see UT Southwestern with its doctors as a destination for excellent medical care and wish to be treated here. Because of inefficiency and lack of a unified effort, however, they end up going somewhere else.



Background Information

- US hospitals suffer from restricted pricing, shrinking margins, capping of reimbursement from Medicare and insurance companies. Domestic patients usually return 40-60 cents on the dollar. International patients return 80-100 cents on the dollar, paying the full cost of their care before leaving home.
- Patients from developing countries seek US hospitals because of better care.
- Patients from developed countries seek US hospitals because of shorter waiting times and the ability to select the specialist of their choice.
- Few US hospitals are making an effort to increase their international patients.



Specific Aims

- By June 2021, we will implement a program to improve international patients' access to care at UTSW with departmental designees who can provide timely financial information to all foreign patients contacting the institution.
- We will increase the number of international patients seen at UT Southwestern by June 2022.
- After implementation of the program, we won't lose a single international patient because of our inability to provide him or her with timely financial information.



Project Plan

- Training one person in each department or division to be responsible for maintaining a list with the package pricing for most common conditions.
- Ensuring the department faculty and staff know the point person designated to answer financial questions from the international patients.
- Encouraging the medical staff to promptly communicate with the patient and begin planning for treatment once the financial details are settled with the patient.



Application of What You Learned at LEAD

- Practicing effective leadership
- Working as a team
- Knowing who the stakeholders are and how to approach them
- Negotiating
- Collaborating
- Creating new opportunities



Proposed Budget

- Zero
 - Package pricing for common conditions already exists or can be obtained with a few emails.
 - Everybody knows who the point person should be in each department.
 - International patients are so few, currently, that no one should need dedicated time or be hired.



Innovation and Significance

- UT Southwestern lacks an international center to recruit and treat foreign patients.
- Benefits of an international program include:
 - Revenue
 - Visibility
 - Allow for clinical opportunities
 - Allow for research collaborations



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