

**Partnership for a Healthy Durham
Access to Care Committee
March 14, 2024
Minutes**

Access to Care: This committee’s activities include advocating for changes that will affect health care coverage for residents across all ages and developing community and agency-based strategies to make measurable improvements in access to care for the uninsured and underinsured residents of Durham.

Facilitated by: Jess Bousquette

Attendees: Gina Upchurch, Krista Kicsak, Siri Dommata, Vinita Panchikarla, Deborah Dolan, Victoria Mosey, Tinesha Smith, Kina Edwards, Elizabeth Brill, Laura Alcorn, Danielle Corcione, Kelly Page, Valarie Worthy, Ashley Bass-Mitchell, Christina Harrison, Jannice Verne, Shannon Jackson, Cheryl Brewer, Edeia Lynch, Catrina Lloyd

Topic	Major Discussion	Recommendations and Action Steps
Welcome - Introductions & Icebreaker (5 minutes)	<p>Introductions in the chat. Name, organization & email address if this is your first time along with the response for the icebreaker.</p> <p>Icebreaker – What is the absolute best thing to do on a sunny day?</p> <p>Minutes are being recorded using Zoom AI Companion.</p>	
Review February Minutes (5 minutes)	<p>Minutes were approved.</p>	
Intro to Senior PharmAssist & Medicare by Gina Upchurch, R.Ph., MPH (30 minutes)	<p>Senior PharmAssist - 919.688.4772; www.seniorpharmassist.org</p> <p>Medicare, Access, and Holistic Healthcare</p> <p>The meeting revolved around the discussion of the distribution of the access to care brochure and the new clinic in Lakewood. Jess highlighted the importance of contributions to the meeting minutes. Gina, a senior pharmacist, was introduced as the guest speaker for the day. She was expected to present on her role and the crucial information regarding Medicare that those with access to Medicare should be aware of. Gina shared her extensive experience and emphasized the need for a holistic approach to healthcare, acknowledging the significance of social care. She also outlined her involvement in influencing Medicare policies on a national level.</p> <p>Health Insurance Disparities in North Carolina</p>	

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Gina discussed the health insurance situation in North Carolina, focusing on employer-provided health insurance and government programs like Medicaid and Medicare. She highlighted the racial disparities in health insurance access, noting that employer-provided health insurance often favors higher-wage, white-collar jobs. Gina also discussed the shift from fee-for-service Medicaid to managed care and the unique aspects of North Carolina's Medicaid program, including the use of community health workers. She mentioned the state's expansion of Medicaid in December 2022, funded mostly by the Federal Government, and the role of nonprofit hospitals in this expansion. Gina explained the difference between Medicare and Medicaid, noting that Medicare is primarily for those 65 and older or with permanent disabilities, while Medicaid is a state program for those with low incomes. She also mentioned the concept of 'dually eligible' individuals who receive benefits through both programs.

Senior Pharmacists' Role in Medication Management

Gina discussed the role of senior pharmacists, particularly in managing medications and providing financial assistance. She emphasized the issue of overmedication in the United States and the need for streamlining drug regimens. She mentioned that their service is not limited to patients but also includes homebound individuals and those requiring transportation. Gina also highlighted their role in Medicare counseling and providing tailored community referrals for various needs such as food, housing, and financial assistance. She explained their financial assistance program, which is available to those aged 60 or older with income up to 250% of the Federal poverty guidelines.

Addressing Medication Non-Adherence and Polypharmacy

Gina discussed their organization's efforts to address public health issues related to medication non-adherence and polypharmacy. She highlighted the importance of listening to patients and tailoring medication to their individual needs. Gina also

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emphasized the role of racial equity in their work, noting the influence of race and racism as social constructs that affect health outcomes. She also mentioned their Participant Advisory Council and their approach to continuity of care through scheduled appointments. Gina also touched on the impact of income and race disparities on health outcomes, specifically in relation to Medicare and home ownership.

Medicare Health Insurance Program Explanation

Gina explained the details of the Medicare health insurance program, which is administered by the Federal Government and provides basic coverage. She highlighted that Medicare consists of four parts, with the need for a secondary coverage or a Medicare Advantage plan due to potential high costs. She further clarified that Original Medicare does not cover prescription drugs or long-term care. Gina also pointed out that more people are opting for Medicare Advantage plans as they offer additional benefits like eye exams, eyeglasses, and fitness. She stressed the importance of understanding the network of providers when choosing a Medicare Advantage plan.

Part D Drug Benefit Complexities and Solutions

Gina discussed the complexity of the Part D drug benefit and how it affects people's income and medication costs. She explained that people can qualify for extra help with their drug benefit through the Inflation Reduction Act, which caps out-of-pocket expenses at \$2,000 in 2023. Gina also highlighted the work of the Senior Pharmacist program and its efforts to help seniors navigate their drug plans, which have saved approximately \$1,300 on average per person. Gina also raised concerns about Medicare's transition towards privatization and the role of insurance companies and health systems in addressing social determinants of health. Jess thanked Gina for her presentation and opened the floor for questions from the audience.

Insurance Types and Access to Care

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	<p>Gina initiated a discussion about the difference between copay and coinsurance, with Jess providing an accurate interpretation. Gina emphasized the importance of understanding insurance types when coaching others. Later, Krista transitioned the conversation to the upcoming spring listening sessions, with a focus on community health assessment. The team discussed the importance of primary care providers, the challenges faced by individuals in accessing healthcare, and the myths surrounding Medicaid eligibility. The team agreed on the need to further explore these issues and understand the community's definition of access to care.</p> <p>Insurance Types and Access to Care</p> <p>Gina initiated a discussion about the difference between copay and coinsurance, with Jess providing an accurate interpretation. Gina emphasized the importance of understanding insurance types when coaching others.</p>	
<p>Access to Care Questions for this Spring's Listening Sessions (10-15 minutes)</p>	<p>Krista transitioned the conversation to the upcoming spring listening sessions, with a focus on community health assessment. The team discussed the importance of primary care providers, the challenges faced by individuals in accessing healthcare, and the myths surrounding Medicaid eligibility. The team agreed on the need to further explore these issues and understand the community's definition of access to care.</p>	
<p>Announcements (5-10 minutes)</p>	<p>Jess reminded the team about an upcoming event called Medicine Drop that Shannon Jackson shared (information in chat). Uma, a student at UNC, shared her role in covering healthcare access for a business news wire program and requested that any stories sent to her be submitted at least a week in advance. Krista then announced the need for volunteers for community listening sessions.. Edeia reminded everyone about the community health worker round table and encouraged anyone interested in presenting to do so. Jess wrapped up the meeting by thanking Gina for her presentation.</p> <p>Krista will coordinate with Bria and other team members to develop questions for the community listening sessions.</p>	

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	Edeia will email the community health worker roundtable flyer to Krista and Catrina.	
Meeting Adjourn		

***Next Meeting:** April 11, 2024: 8:30-9:30am