Genesurance Counseling: Patient Perspectives

Chelsea Wagner, BS (Advisor: Jennifer Hoskovec, MS, CGC)

Genetic counselors (GCs) have recently reported an increase in the discussion of insurance-related, or “genesurance,” topics during genetic counseling sessions. Despite increasing frequency, there have been limited studies examining patient expectations of GCs in these types of discussions. This study aimed to explore patient expectations of genetic counselors in genesurance discussions during a genetic counseling session, as well as factors that may impact those expectations, including health insurance literacy. A 38-item survey, including a validated tool to assess health insurance literacy (HIL) was administered prior to patients receiving prenatal or cancer genetic counseling. A total of 360 responses were analyzed. Key variables were compared using chi-square analysis and multivariate logistic regression was used to assess associations between factors, while controlling for potential confounders. Over 80% of patients expected genesurance topics to be discussed during a genetic counseling session with a majority expecting their GC to: provide them an estimated out-of-pocket (OOP) cost for a genetic test (83%), know if a genetic test is a covered benefit (82%), and provide referral information if they have additional questions (81%). Other idealistic expectations included genetic counselors providing cost and coverage information specific to individual insurance plans (61%), and providing an exact OOP cost (43%) for a genetic test. Compared to Caucasians, Hispanics and African Americans were significantly more likely to expect these two actions from their GCs. In general, HIL did not impact patient expectations of GCs. This study explored and delineated patient expectations of genetic counselors in genesurance discussions, indicating patient’s desire to discuss these topics during a genetic counseling session. Further studies will help establish the most effective way to communicate this information to patients, assess current practices of genetic counseling training programs in insurance related topics, and assist in the development of further specialized HIL assessment tools.

Advisory Committee:
Jennifer Hoskovec, MS, CGC, Chair
Sandra Darilek, MS, CGC
Jacqueline Harkenrider, MS, CGC
Lauren Murphy, MS, CGC
Eleazar Soto, MD