

Pathology Trainee Project Grants in Healthcare Innovation
Letter of Intent

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Pathology health literacy: a longitudinal study of patient understanding of the surgical pathology report and the role of the pathologist

With accessible electronic health records, patients have greater access to their health information, including pathology reports. Though this access increases patient empowerment and knowledge, pathology reports are written directed to physicians¹ and therefore may use language unfamiliar to patients. Despite AMA recommendations that written health materials not exceed a middle school reading level,² one study found that many urologic pathology reports are written at an upper high school level.³ The aim of this project is to assess patient understanding of the role of the pathologist and language used in pathology reports, to assemble a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and language which patients find problematic, to offer strategies for developing more understandable reports that preserve necessary patient care information, and to increase patient understanding of the pathology report and the pathologist's role. A presentation will be recorded using Mediasite video capture and a link made available through web and print postings. The presentation will be accessible "on demand" after participants answer a short demographic survey and assessment of pre-presentation pathology literacy. The presentation will include examples of pathology reports followed by explanations of the terms and concepts described in the reports. Follow-up surveys at three months and one year will assess changes in the participants' understanding of the topics covered in the presentation. Additionally, the survey will gauge participants' confidence interpreting their own health information and opinions on the usefulness of the presentation. Survey results and feedback will be used to develop further patient presentations and education resources.

Estimate of proposed total budget: \$5000

References

1. Mossanen M, True LD, Wright JL, Vakar-Lopez F, Lavalley D, Gore JL. Surgical pathology and the patient: a systematic review evaluating the primary audience of pathology reports. *Hum Pathol*. 2014; 45: 2192-2201. doi: 10.1016/j.humpath.2014.07.008
2. Weiss BD. *Health literacy: a manual for clinicians*. American Medical Association Foundation and American Medical Association; 2003.

3. Mossanen M, Calvert JK, Wright JL, True LD, Lin DW, Gore JL. Readability of urologic pathology reports: the need for patient-centered approaches. *Urol Oncol.* 2014; 32: 1091-1094. doi: 10.1016/j.urolonc.2014.04.011