

Dr. Lauren Hamel awarded Research Scholar Grant from American Cancer Society



Congratulations to Lauren M. Hamel, Ph.D., assistant professor and member of the Population Studies and Disparities Research Program at Karmanos Cancer Institute and Wayne State University School of Medicine (WSU SOM), who was recently awarded a Research Scholar Grant from the American Cancer Society. She will test the effectiveness of a patient-focused intervention to improve patient-provider treatment cost discussions and other patient outcomes related to the financial consequences of cancer treatment.

Dr. Hamel and her team responded to the growing problem of financial toxicity, or the severe material and psychological burden of the cost of cancer treatment. Financial toxicity affects an estimated 30-50 percent of patients with cancer, especially patients who are racial/ethnic minorities, have lower incomes or are under

65 years of age. However, well-timed and effective patient-oncologist treatment cost discussions could help. Dr. Hamel and her team designed, built and pilot tested the DISCO App (Discussions of Cost), which is presented to patients on an iPad and includes a brief educational video on treatment costs patients may incur, ways to manage costs and then advises patients that having a discussion with their oncologist is a good way to start managing costs. Patients then respond to questions related to their financial situation (e.g., employment, insurance). Based on their responses, the DISCO App presents them with an individualized list of cost-related questions to ask their oncologist or other providers.

This five-year grant for \$844,000 will fund a randomized controlled trial of the DISCO App's effectiveness using video-recorded interactions between patients and their oncologists and longitudinal self-report data from patients. Dr. Hamel's team includes Karmanos and WSU SOM investigators including Susan Eggly, Ph.D., Elisabeth Heath, M.D. and Seongho Kim, Ph.D., as well as David Dougherty, M.D., MBA of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, MA.