

Consumer Advisory Board Member Recommendations: 12/13/18

Application Excerpts

Christiane Pimentel

Q4. Describe your experience using the healthcare system, including, if you wish, health conditions that affect you. If you work as an advocate please describe your experience working on behalf of others.

From my work at several hospitals and my shadowing, I learned that I greatly enjoy serving medically underserved communities; I find them to be most receptive, making my work more rewarding. My time at the Waterbury Hospital Infectious Disease Clinic, supporting AIDS/HIV and hepatitis patients, revealed the unique needs of chronically-ill patients. Specifically, I saw the demand for compassionate, open-minded, and understanding doctors who pursue partnerships with patients and focus on their needs as individuals, beyond the technical approach to the illness. This encouraged me to become well-informed on the patients need and focus on educating and supporting patients while ensuring their dignity. Volunteering at nursing homes, health fairs, and community programs aimed at assisting the socioeconomically marginalized further encouraged me to work for patient advocacy and legislative reform. While translating for Spanish-, Portuguese-, French-, and Cape Verdean Creole-speaking patients, I saw the value of having care providers with whom patients can communicate effectively and comfortably but also connect with and build rapport. Patient advocacy is inherent to my position as the Community Health Outreach Coordinator. In this capacity, I ardently advocate for local health needs, serve as a patient liaison, and work towards promoting health equity. Through all of my work, I have found that patients are willing to disclose personal matters that impact their wellbeing that they initially did not feel comfortable or empowered to share with their provider, such as not having sufficient food, housing, income, etc.

Q5. What would you bring to healthcare reform discussions and how would your participation contribute to the overall process of improving healthcare?

Through my studies, my work, my community involvement, and my personal experiences, I have acquired a considerable understanding of the healthcare system and the factors that impact it—and I hope to learn much more as a member of SIM CAB. One of my birth country's (Cape Verde's) biggest problems is its lack of adequate medical attention and resources, which shortens the lifespan of many of its people. While the U.S. offered unimaginable opportunities, I noticed shortly after arriving that it too was plagued by its limited access to healthcare. My family and I personally experienced such limitations. My employment at Waterbury Hospital exposed me to the intricacies and inner workings of a hospital/medical field, particularly the administrative tasks that take place in the background but are essential to keeping both the patient and hospital informed. Through patient advocacy, community advancement, and grant writing, I have achieved familiarity with state and federal laws. Engaging with patients helped me understand the many factors and circumstances surrounding a patient's visit. I have learned that compassion and cultural/situational understanding is as necessary in treatment as medicine itself. I believe that organizations (such as SIM CAB) working to advocate for change should reflect this ideology. All of my experiences have afforded me a unique perspective of human conditions and the healthcare system and will make me an impartial, earnest, and rounded participant of the CAB

respectful discourses. In the field, I have learned that medicine is a team sport where people of various skills work together for the good of the patient. I believe it would be a great opportunity to be part of a similar collaborative team working towards solutions. The emphasis CAB places on assembling a culturally and experientially diverse board displays its ambition to speak to the needs of the patient population. Being part of such a team will significantly contribute to my becoming a knowledgeable, culturally-competent, patient-focused primary care physician.

Q6. Please describe the health coverage experience that you would bring to the process regarding public or private health. For example, Medicare, HUSKY (Medicaid), Access Health CT or commercial insurance.

At my previous positions, I was responsible for confirming patient insurance eligibility and benefits for both medical and dental services. While working at the Waterbury Hospital and shadowing many elite physicians, I gained insight into challenges that healthcare providers face. Recent legislative changes greatly impact the services that they can provide and, as a result, has a great effect on the doctor-patient relationship. Doctors are forced to make decisions based on conditional approval from insurance companies. Much time is lost waiting to see if a proposed treatment plan laid out by the physician is accepted. Many are forced to revise their plan, choosing from restricted lists based on what insurance deems medically appropriate. In several of our conversations, many doctors expressed concerns that some facets of the insurance industry are counter to their medical training and even that a dangerous precedent is being set by discouraging advancements in medical care when they approve the most economical procedure instead of the most modern and efficient one. In addition, insurance definitions of “necessary” and “discretionary” affect fundamental aspects of patient consultations. In my current position, my team and I review patient eligibility for health coverage. Our goal is to provide education and access to health insurance to all patients who are eligible. I have often assisted patients in contacting insurance companies for health coverage inquiries and navigating the complex jargon of their health plans.

Q7. Who do you work for and in what capacity?

Wheeler Clinic is a complete healthcare facility specializing in treating chronic illnesses (heart disease, diabetes, asthma, etc.) mental illness, and substance abuse. As the Community Health Outreach Coordinator at Wheeler Clinic, I manage the Community Health Workers (CHWs) program in our Community Outreach department. Our Community Outreach’s main objective is to bridge the gaps between patients and their providers. We are responsible for understanding the patient/client as a whole and identifying any barriers preventing him/her from achieving the highest level of wellness. These barriers often include: insufficient nutrition, homelessness, lack of medication education, uninsured status, etc. Our Community Outreach team also give a voice to the community by serving as trusted figures who can relay patients’ preferences, concerns, or impediments to their clinicians. We actively work with the patient and their care team to alleviate the negative effects of social determinants of health. We work to understand the community by meeting the members where they are: churches, libraries, shelters, etc. Through my position, I also work diligently to forge partnerships with the community to better understand their needs, whether it is through attending community meetings, partnering with other organizations who serve the same population or simply meeting with highly regarded members who know the community best. I also coordinate any community engagement activities such as health fairs, educational popups, etc. Lastly, I am in charge of addressing our highest

risk patients. I read their charts, try to identify the factors that make them high risk, contact them for a better understand their needs, and connect them with the CHW that can best address their needs and help them achieve balance.

Consumer Advisory Board Alternate Recommendations:

Soneprasith Phrommavanh

Q4 Describe your experience using the healthcare system, including, if you wish, health conditions that affect you. If you work as an advocate please describe your experience working on behalf of others.

Personally, my experience using the healthcare system has been a non-issue. I've been living in this country for the past 35 years and have had commercial health insurance for the most part during this time. I feel comfortable navigating the existing healthcare system and have been able to advocate for myself and my family with no significant trouble. The same thing cannot be said while caring for my own parents when they were living with me. I remember a time when my mother had a medical appointment at the Yale New Haven Hospital when the attending physician insisted that I could not interpret/translate for her and that the hospital needed to have a professional interpreter. I cooperated with the hospital but insisted to be present during her appointment, as I had had a situation where the interpretation was inaccurate. Sure enough, the interpreter hired by the hospital did not interpret/translate what my mother was saying accurately and I had to intervene. Inaccurate interpretation/translation could lead to a different course of medical treatment or unnecessary medical treatment.

Q5 What would you bring to healthcare reform discussions and how would your participation contribute to the overall process of improving healthcare?

It is probably obvious to you by now that you have figured out that I was not born in this country. In fact, I was born in Laos, escaped at the age of 16 by myself to a refugee camp in Thailand, went to France as a refugee for 5 years, and finally migrated to the US in 1983 at the age 23 to reunify with the rest of my family. The reason I mentioned all of this is because each one of us experiences life differently and this needs to be taken into consideration when talking about healthcare. Not all Laotians traveled this exact same journey to get to this country. Also, in my current capacity as a DCF employee, I have advocated for the families I have worked with in order to access appropriate mental health services and have worked with commercial insurance companies in order to remove some of the barriers to extended treatments. I think that my unique personal experience coupled with my professional one would allow me to bring a different perspective to the overall process of improving healthcare.

Q6 Please describe the health coverage experience that you would bring to the process regarding public or private health. For example, Medicare, HUSKY (Medicaid), Access Health CT or commercial insurance.

Outreach and health education are the two very important components for minority groups when it comes to healthcare. Prevention work is the most cost effective tool for healthcare. Because the majority of the information pertaining to healthcare in this country is either in English and Spanish, we leave out other minority groups in the dark defending for themselves. The outreach work can definitely fill that gap. Having someone who can speak the same language assisting them in navigating the complex healthcare system and helping to advocate for themselves with their dignity intact can make people feel respected.

Q7 Who do you work for and in what capacity?

I am currently working for the State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) and have been working there since April 1996. During my employment with the Department I have worked in different aspects of child protection including ongoing services, permanency, investigations, Out-Of-State visitations, Private Non-Medical Institution (PNMI) audits, Out-Of-State program reviews and Foster Home Quality and Satisfaction surveys. Since January 2018, I've been working as a Permanency Resource Specialist assisting area offices (New Haven and Milford) in achieving permanency (Reunification, Transfer of Guardianship, Adoption) for children/youth in DCF care. I am also involved actively with the Lao Association of CT and serve as a Vice President to the association.

Taylor Edelmann

Q4 Describe your experience using the healthcare system, including, if you wish, health conditions that affect you. If you work as an advocate please describe your experience working on behalf of others.

As a transgender individual it has been a challenge to find a PCP who truly comprehends the needs of the LGBTQ population. Fortunately, I was able to connect with a provider after working in my field for a few years. Many providers have not been trained to care for this population and many patients feel those effects. In terms of the LGBTQ patients I work with, I have noticed that it is extremely difficult for transmasculine patients to find a gynecologist they are comfortable with.

Q5 What would you bring to healthcare reform discussions and how would your participation contribute to the overall process of improving healthcare?

I would be bringing a ground level approach to the discussion and a great deal of insight in regard to special populations i.e. LGBTQ and Ryan White. These populations are often overlooked and not given the attention they require so I believe it would prove useful to have my input. I have a vast knowledge of the resources available to these populations across the state and am aware of the various barriers that keep these patients from accessing quality care.

Q6 Please describe the health coverage experience that you would bring to the process regarding public or private health. For example, Medicare, HUSKY (Medicaid), Access Health CT or commercial insurance.

I personally have commercial insurance, but see Medicare and Medicaid patients on a daily basis. I'm familiar with the application processes and know the services covered for each insurance type. I work closely with our Financial Counselor who processes all of our sliding scale and Access Health CT applications since a great deal of our patients need assistance navigating the process.

Q7 Who do you work for and in what capacity?

I work for Optimus Health Care as a Community Health Worker and a Ryan White/LGBTQ+ Outreach Worker. I strive to provide patients with the support and resources they need in order to address their social, mental, and physical needs.

Practice Transformation Taskforce Consumer Representative Recommendations

Application Excerpts

Juan David Ospina

Q4 Describe your experience using the healthcare system, including, if you wish, health conditions that affect you. If you work as an advocate, please describe your experience working on behalf of others.

I am recently diagnosed with a chronic illness called Meniere's Disease which is an inner-ear condition. I have been referred multiple times to different specialist in search for a cause and treatment of my conditions. I understand the challenges of those who go through chronic illnesses, and their struggles as they search for an answer to improve their quality of life.

Q5 What would you bring to health reform discussions and how would your participation contribute to the overall process of improving healthcare?

I would like to bring clarity and purpose to our discussions surrounding healthcare processes. A Structure that accepts multiple viewpoints while keeping the end goal in mind is important. I would bring perspectives from citizens throughout Fairfield county and I will also listen to the other ideas in the table. The overall process of improving healthcare can be a formidable task, but if broken down into manageable pieces then it is possible.

Q6 Please describe the health coverage experience that you would bring to the process regarding public or private health. For example, Medicare, HUSKY (Medicaid), Access Health CT or commercial insurance.

As a former Certified Application Counselor for Access Health, I helped enroll dozens of patient from 2011 through 2015 before I was deployed for combat medic training with the United States Army. I have heard stories first hand from families who were relieved from the various options for health coverage offered through Connecticut's health insurance exchange. I am also familiar with the qualified health plans that were made available for those who did not qualify for Medicaid but still had tax credits that helped subsidize any premium. Currently, as a care coordinator, I work closely with complex care patients who may fall through the crack of health care thereby exacerbating whatever condition they found themselves in initially. I focus particularly on the social determinants of health including transportation and nutrition and how those non-clinical needs may affect the overall well-being of a patient.

Q7 Who do you work for and in what capacity? (if applicable)

Currently I am a care coordinator for Community Health Center, Inc.

Supriyo Chatterjee

Q4 Describe your experience using the healthcare system, including, if you wish, health conditions that affect you. If you work as an advocate, please describe your experience working on behalf of others.

As a consumer, the use of preventive care (e.g., flu shots). I recently experienced orthopedic care – MRI, treatments, physical therapy, and medications. This provided me with deep insights in to the healthcare system spectrum - from insurance payments, deductibles, and costs during care. Please see attached bio for advocacy work.

Q5 What would you bring to health reform discussions and how would your participation contribute to the overall process of improving healthcare?

In addition to being a healthcare consumer with recent experience in orthopedic care, I have extensive experience in the healthcare business, policy, and information technologies. I have also advocated for healthcare reform and written numerous public comments and legislative testimonials. I am also well-versed in health equity matters (see attached bio).

Q6 Please describe the health coverage experience that you would bring to the process regarding public or private health. For example, Medicare, HUSKY (Medicaid), Access Health CT or commercial insurance.

As a consumer, the use of preventive care (e.g., flu shots). I recently experienced orthopedic care – MRI, treatments, physical therapy, and medications. This provided me with deep insights in to the healthcare system spectrum - from insurance payments, deductibles, and costs during care. I am also well-versed in health equity matters (see attached bio).

Q7 Who do you work for and in what capacity? (if applicable)

I am an independent consultant for healthcare, technology, and economic development matters. Clients include nonprofits, corporations, and govt. agencies.