

Kaille Meguiar, D.O.

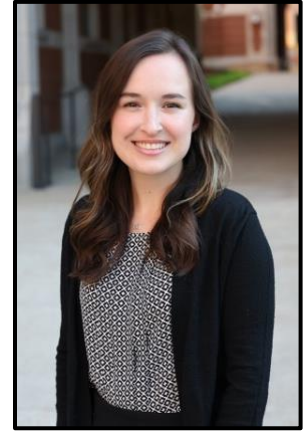
M.P.H. Candidate, Epidemiology Track

kaille.meguiar@vanderbilt.edu

Practicum Site: Gilda's Club of Middle Tennessee

Practicum Site Supervisors: Christina Healey, L.P.C., M.S.H.P.
and Harriet Schiffan, M.S.W., M.A.J.C.S.

Improving Access and Diversity of Cancer Care Outreach Programs



Introduction: Support groups have been shown to improve quality of life for patient's living with cancer, and additionally help to promote increased coping ability. Support groups can be associated with an oncology clinic, but there are also organizations in the community that help support the patient, their caregiver, and family. Gilda's Club, founded initially in 1995 by Gilda Radner, was created to better support the cancer community. Other studies have evaluated the role of external support groups like Gilda's Club and have consistently shown that these environments help patients to improve their coping abilities, engage in sharing their experiences and understanding their illness, and overall lead to being more informed regarding their choices. Given this importance, evaluating barriers to access to Gilda's Club is imperative to best support all cancer patients across a variety of sociodemographic classes.

Methods: A fifteen-question survey was created with insight from literature review and input from Gilda's Club of Middle Tennessee program leadership to understand the current Gilda's membership group. Questions were a mix of multiple choice, yes/no, or free text to elucidate thoughts and opinions. The survey was distributed in the monthly Gilda's Club email to all members.

Results: Preliminary data from a small subset of participants have been collected. Results indicate that many patients wish they would have heard about Gilda's Club at diagnosis from their physician, and that the support groups and community have kept people coming back to Gilda's Club.

Conclusions: Based on preliminary results, early introduction to available support groups is a request of cancer patients and their families. As we collect more information from more Gilda's Club members, future interventions in the clinic space to better introduce Gilda's Club to patients with a new cancer diagnosis can be implemented.