DIGITIZING THE DELIVERY OF THE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM AT HUMBER RIVER HEALTH'S CANCER CARE CLINIC

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DESCRIPTION

On-site peer support has been identified as a gap through observations from patients in the Cancer Care Clinic at Humber River Health (HRH). Peer support commonly occurs informally in patient waiting rooms and treatment areas, with patients sharing their experiences and seeking information. Acknowledging that many successful Peer Support Program services already exist in other hospital and community settings, the Cancer Care Patient & Family Advisory Council took initiative to develop an innovative local Peer Support Program. The program incorporates the use of a home-grown digital platform (Healix™) for peer interaction, communication, and resource-sharing.

OBJECTIVE

To enable patients to share experiences, promote and enhance emotional well-being, and increase self-empowerment.

ACTIONS TAKEN

It was identified that a platform was needed to ensure:

- Exchange of personal information
- Sharing of community resources
- Communication linkages between Peer Volunteers and patients requesting support (Requestors)
- Confidential documentation of therapeutic interactions.

A Peer Support Program App was designed in Healix™ to support these activities (Figure 2). The onboarding and discharge processes were developed in the digital platform with e-Signature functionality, in addition to the creation of a Discharge Summary. A Peer Volunteer and Requestor evaluation were conducted to examine effectiveness of the program.

LESSONS LEARNED

By improving end-user capacity with technology and ensuring timely notifications from Healix™ to Volunteers and Requestors, inquiries can be addressed more promptly and streamlines onboarding.
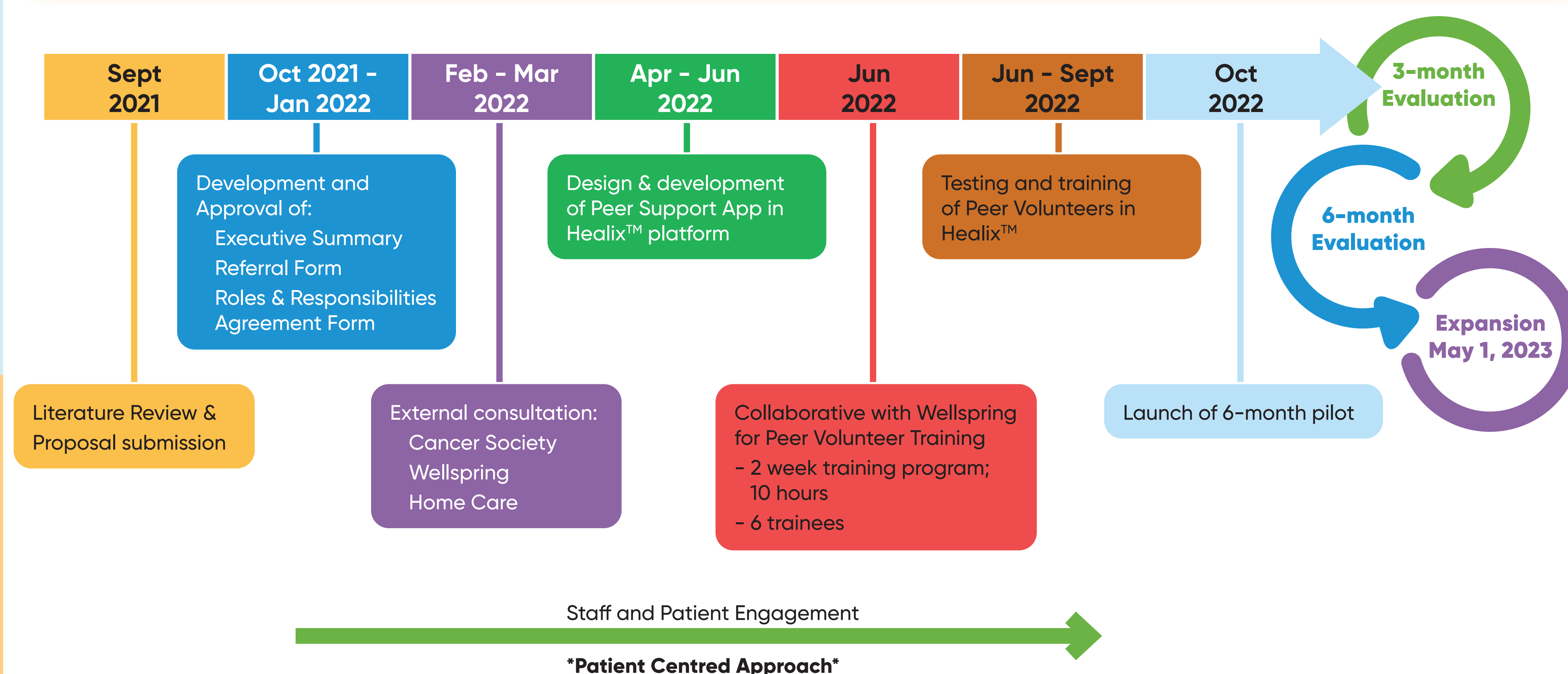

Figure 1.
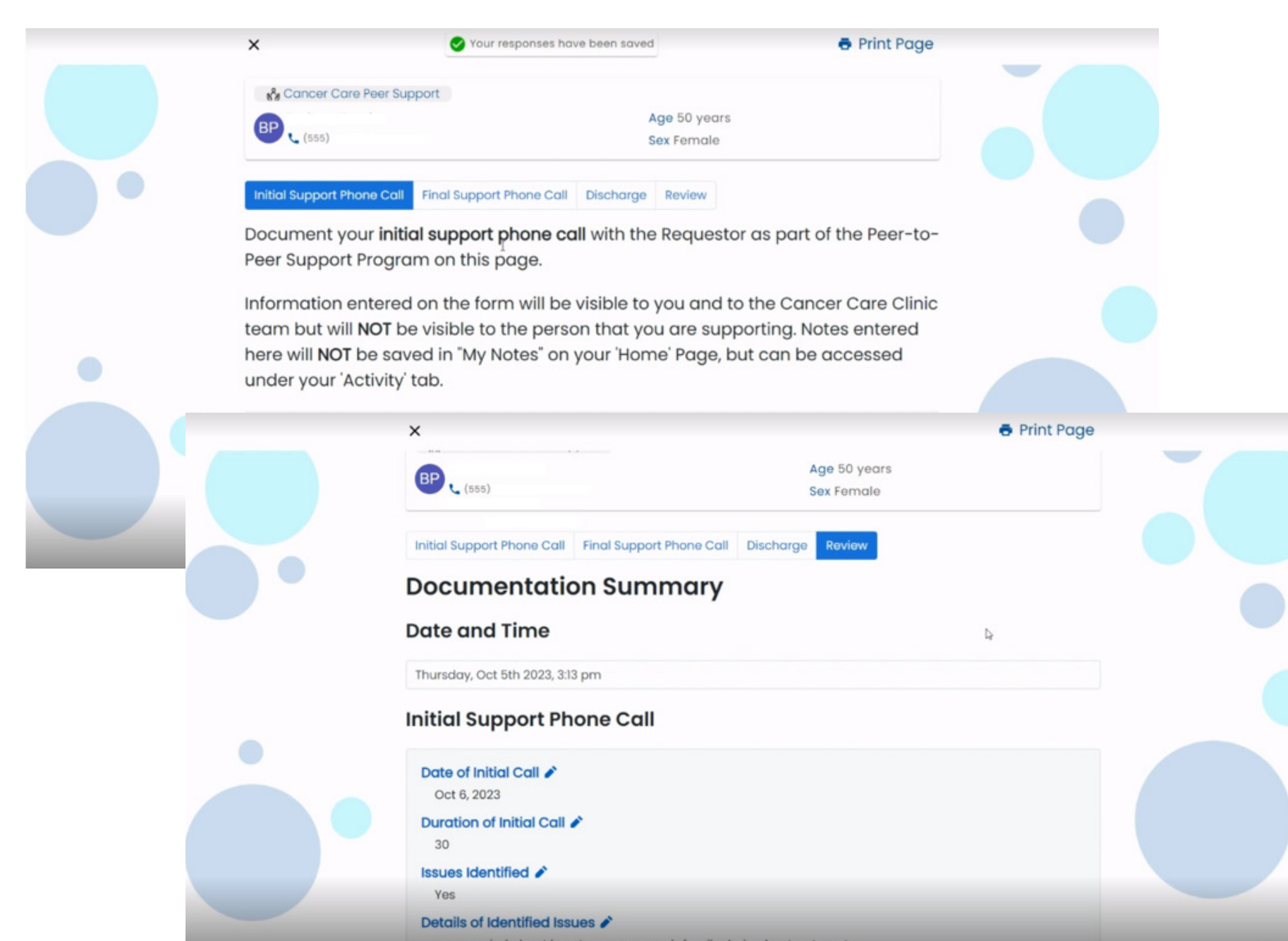Implementation Roadmap: Development of Peer Support Program and App in Healix™

Figure 2.
Example of Peer Volunteer Documentation in Healix™

Patient Reported Outcomes

Peer Volunteer Experience

"Reminding myself that it's about the other person and being there for them"

"Reflecting on own experiences to share at personal level builds trust"

"As a patient, this is something I was desperately looking for at the beginning of my own journey and now to be a volunteer is extremely rewarding"

Patient Requestor Experience

"It's been very helpful having someone who went through a similar experience."

"It has been effective and helpful to talk to someone else going through the same thing as me."

"I felt more comfortable and relaxed."

Figure 3.
Anecdotal feedback from Peer Volunteers and Requestors.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Peer Volunteers reported 100% role satisfaction, spending an average of 30-60 minutes on support calls. Patients indicated that the program was a resource sought early in their care journey and found being a Peer Volunteer to be a rewarding experience (Figure 3). They reported using Healix™ to coordinate appointments, document notes, share resources, and connect with the clinical team. They strongly agreed the onboarding and discharge process using Healix™, allowed for seamless communication, organization of notes, and easy navigation while protecting privacy.