

Cancer chemotherapy nursing practice

New Canadian standards enhance oncology care

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In response to the rapidly changing face of chemotherapy treatment and care in Canada, the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology/Association canadienne des infirmières en oncologie (CANO/ACIO) has stepped up to the plate to ensure oncology nurses and organizations have access to the tools and knowledge products essential to provide safe, patient-focused and evidence-based care. The new *Standards and Competencies for Cancer Chemotherapy Nursing Practice* (Standards and Competencies), released in September 2011, outline evidence-based standards of practice for the safe and effective nursing care of patients receiving chemotherapy treatment that are applicable across urban, rural and remote care settings. By referencing these new Standards and Competencies regulating health bodies and healthcare organisations have access to professional standards that reflect the most current evidence and that were vetted through an intense peer review process. Patients at facilities adopting such high standards can expect to receive chemotherapy care that addresses their educational, physical and psychosocial needs. The CANO/ACIO standards provide oncology nurses with educational and organizational resources to ensure they achieve national standards and competencies and organizations will be able to identify and implement essential structures and resources to ensure optimal safety and health outcomes. According to Tracy Truant, RN, MSN, past CANO/ACIO Director-at-Large for Professional Practice 2007-2010, the new Standards and Competencies demonstrate CANO/ACIO's leadership role on a national and international level.

The development and release of the new Standards and Competencies represents one component of a multiphase National Strategy for Chemotherapy Administration (NSCA) introduced by CANO/ACIO in 2008. The NSCA was guided by the vision that "every patient across Canada, regardless of geography, receives chemotherapy treatment from oncology nurses who meet a predetermined standard of practice through a comprehensive education program to ensure competency."

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"CANO/ACIO is among the first professional oncology nursing organizations around the world to take a leadership role in setting the standard of care for people receiving chemotherapy treatment and care by oncology nurses. In this way, CANO/ACIO is enacting its vision,¹ CANO/ACIO will be the nursing leader in cancer control nationally and a vital influence internationally."


Tracy Truant, RN, MSN

DISSEMINATION

In response to the recommendations of the NSCA working group, 5 key dissemination tools were developed: promotional material, national education resource lists, recommendations for content to be included in cancer chemotherapy policies, a self-assessment tool with a learning plan and an introductory educational tool. The final Standards and Competencies and Toolkit were released (in English and French) to CANO/ACIO's membership at the 2011 CANO/ACIO annual conference. All documents are available on the CANO/ACIO website for members and the public to access. Social networking websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, have also been utilized to announce the availability of these documents to a wider audience. A media campaign is being planned, following the release of the tools to CANO/ACIO members.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

The next phase will be to implement and evaluate the Standards and Competencies. CANO/ACIO will be completing a pilot evaluation in various regions and settings across Canada. Additional tools will be developed throughout the implementation phases based on needs identified by the membership and through pilot testing.

CANO/ACIO's Standards and Competencies will greatly influence and enhance nursing practice within Canada and internationally. These standards are the first of their kind nationally, and will set the bar for healthcare professionals maintaining cancer chemotherapy continuing competence, as well as provide concrete standards for the initial development of competence. CANO/ACIO believes that these standards are an essential tool to enhance oncology patient care in Canada. 

References

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