

Lifelong Learning for Professional Oncology Nurses

Nursing, as a profession, is called to lead change and advance health (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2010). To meet this challenge, nurses must practice a commitment to lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is the notion that learning occurs along a continuum, from elementary and secondary education to undergraduate and graduate education, lasting through the end of one's career (IOM, 2009). Learning occurs in a variety of methods and across multiple settings including, but not limited to, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral education, self-study, formal and informal continuing education, and other types of learning.

Nurses, from the bedside to academia, are leaders in health care. The evolving healthcare system requires nurses to engage in continuous professional development, advanced nursing education, and the development of interprofessional models of care. Accrediting bodies, schools of nursing, healthcare organizations, and continuing competency educators from multiple health professions should collaborate to ensure that nurses, nursing students, and faculty engage in lifelong learning to meet these evolving needs (IOM, 2010). This fundamental process equips nurses with the expert skills and knowledge to meet and support patients' needs, lead service development, and impact health improvement (Royal College of Nursing, 2002).

Although basic principles of oncology nursing care may remain steadfast, emerging science and technology, trends in care delivery models, and data from clinical trials and nursing research identify numerous domains in which oncology nurses must remain current throughout their careers. Lifelong learning enables oncology nurses to stay informed of scientific advances and research, lead and practice nursing research and evidenced-based nursing, and attain and maintain competency in the specialty of oncology nursing to provide safe, effective, and quality care to patients with cancer and their caregivers.

It Is the Position of ONS That All Oncology Nurses Engage in Lifelong Learning by _____

- Seeking opportunities that promote lifelong learning and advancement of one's profession from entry level to practice throughout the life of one's career.
- Conducting ongoing self-assessment of learning needs through a variety of methods including, but not limited to, self-reflection and feedback from peers, employers, and colleagues.
- Continually seeking opportunities that promote learning and advancement of one's skills in the science and practice of oncology nursing, technology, economics, and healthcare trends.
- Creating, engaging, and leading innovative approaches to learning for nurse learners throughout the life span, which may include distance learning models, use of technologic modalities for content delivery (i.e., simulation), e-learning, internships, and residency programs in nursing.
- Pursuing, obtaining, and maintaining specialty certification in oncology nursing.
- Engaging in assessing, attaining, and maintaining competency in the practice of oncology nursing through a variety of methods (i.e., testing, simulation, cases studies, e-learning, etc.).
- Leading innovative practice change in the specialty of oncology nursing through evidence-based practice, research, quality improvement, and education.
- Precepting, coaching, and mentoring of nurses.
- Partnering with physicians and other healthcare providers to lead change, foster critical thinking, develop innovative care models, and contribute to the delivery of quality cancer care.
- Influencing and shaping health policy as it relates to the healthcare environment through participation in legislative activities and advocacy initiatives.
- Sharing of knowledge and skills by participating in the oncology education of nurses and other members of the healthcare team through various methods, such as presentations, conferences, in-services, journal clubs, and e-learning.
- Advancing the science, art, and practice of oncology nursing through scholarly and volunteer work (i.e., authorship, publications, lectureship, advocacy, community, and ONS Board service).

Approved by the ONS Board of Directors, 12/15/2011.



References

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Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/12.ONF.127