

A comprehensive cancer center in the midwestern United States implemented a stakeholder-engaged quality improvement process to extend its existing one-year advanced practice provider (APP) fellowship program consisting of general oncology education and clinical experience to include an additional survivorship clinical rotation. APP fellowship alumni and program stakeholders reported noticeable benefits and greater importance attributed to program participation, validating inclusion of a survivorship clinic rotation as part of the fellowship program.

AT A GLANCE

- APPs, particularly those with limited oncology experience, should have the opportunity to learn about the oncology-specific needs and care of cancer survivors across the continuum of cancer care.
- Implementing a cancer survivorship rotation into an APP oncology fellowship curriculum is feasible.
- Program outcomes suggest APP fellowship alumni may be better able to manage the complex concerns of cancer survivors than their peers who lack such education.

KEYWORDS

advanced practice nursing; quality improvement; survivorship; cancer survivors

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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Survivorship Fellowship

Evaluation and evolution of a program for advanced practice providers

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The field of cancer survivorship has grown tremendously since coinage of its name in 1985, spurred by advancements

in cancer treatment that have resulted in an estimated 16.9 million Americans with a history of cancer being alive as of January 1, 2019 (American Cancer Society [ACS], 2019). ACS and the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) have declared survivorship a public health priority, given the growing number of survivors and the distinct and serious healthcare issues that stem from a cancer diagnosis (e.g., long-term morbidity, premature mortality) (Alfano et al., 2019; Mullan, 1985). Advanced practice providers (APPs), such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants, are integral members of the healthcare team who can deliver high-quality, comprehensive oncology care vital to patients' survivorship.

An ASCO survey of oncology healthcare providers and healthcare systems reported that APPs were instrumental in coordinating delivery of cancer treatment and symptom and pain management, as well as in providing primary care to cancer survivors (Viale, 2017). However, according to a survey of 540 oncology APPs, only 70 (13%) identified survivorship as their specialty (Bruinooge et al., 2018). Therefore, there is a need for an APP oncology fellowship program focused on survivorship to support the provision of high-quality, evidence-based cancer

care. In response, a National Institutes of Health–funded training program delivering didactic lectures and encouraging discussion among nurse practitioners, nurses, and clinical nurse specialists on principles of survivorship care was formed (Grant, McCabe, & Economou, 2017). Minimal data exist regarding the education and training of APPs in survivorship care; this article details the evaluation and evolution of one of the first APP oncology fellowship programs with an enhanced survivorship focus in the United States.

Methods and Results

In 2013, the Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center (CCC)–Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute (The James) in Columbus initiated a one-year APP fellowship program intended to provide oncology-specific knowledge and clinical experiences. Although the initial program included didactic content about survivorship, APP fellows did not participate in a survivorship clinical experience. The James then commenced a quality improvement (QI) project aimed at ensuring the delivery of high-quality survivorship care across the institution. The Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle was the model used for program evaluation (Langley et al., 2009).

Plan

To understand how survivorship should be incorporated into the existing APP