

Models of Clinical Practice Integration in Academic Oncology Nursing

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Oncology nursing faculty at academic institutions help equip the next generation of cancer care professionals. In research- and teaching-focused nursing faculty roles, there are barriers to maintaining clinical oncology nursing practice. A stronger prioritization of clinical oncology practice as part of a faculty appointment may enhance the faculty nurse's clinical acumen and incentivize oncology nurses to consider a career in academia. This article reviews literature from PubMed®, Google Scholar™, printed texts (e.g., American Association of Colleges of Nursing scientific reports), and non-published survey findings (e.g., Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation reports) to summarize and evaluate models incorporating oncology clinical nursing practice into an academic appointment. This review can inform oncology nurses about academic roles and pathways to maintain professional clinical practice.

AT A GLANCE

- Oncology nursing faculty find value in maintaining clinical practice.
- Partnerships between nursing schools and cancer care health systems can facilitate faculty clinical practice.
- Faculty can hold many clinical roles in the RN or advanced practice RN scope of practice.

KEYWORDS

oncology; nursing; education; integration; clinical practice; academic

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By 2025, it is estimated that nearly one-third of U.S. nursing faculty in undergraduate and graduate programs will retire (Fang & Kesten, 2017). In October 2022, 909 nursing schools across the United States reported a total of 2,166 full-time faculty vacancies and that they expected they would need to fill an additional 128 positions to meet the growing student demand (Byrne et al., 2022). With a growing nursing shortage and a pressing faculty shortage in nursing schools, new and innovative models for recruiting and retaining high-quality nursing faculty are needed (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2022b).

Nursing faculty specialized in oncology clinical care can prepare the next generation of oncology nursing professionals. However, in December 2022, the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation reported that less than 0.05% of oncology certified nurses identify as an academic educator (see Table 1). As early-career oncology nurses consider seeking faculty appointments, models for supporting and encouraging an integration of clinical practice, scholarship, and education as part of those appointments are needed to make a career in academia more appealing (Gibson, 2019).

To date, clinical care is not a standard component of nursing faculty appointments, particularly not for didactic teaching and research roles (Paton et al., 2022). For early-career oncology nurses, having a meaningful clinical practice as part of a full-time academic appointment can support professional development, clinical acumen and relevance, and personal satisfaction (Haase et al., 2021).

This article reviews the current state of integrated academic appointments and clinical care in oncology nursing, discusses emerging models for this integration, and presents a visual model to support early-career oncology nurses seeking a faculty appointment that supports clinical care as part of that appointment. In addition, this review discusses published benefits and barriers to a combined role for nursing schools and healthcare systems.

Methods

This review summarizes models of faculty practice, survey results, and research evidence to synthesize pathways for oncology nurses to combine clinical practice with an academic (i.e., faculty) role. Evidence for this review was retrieved from PubMed®, Google Scholar™, printed texts (e.g., AACN scientific reports), and nonpublished survey findings (e.g., Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation reports) from 1998 to 2023.