Cancer Impacts the Health of People in Every Community

Oncology Competencies for Undergraduate Nursing Curriculum

With an increasing number of cancer diagnoses and survivors, all nurses need basic oncology knowledge to provide the best care to their patients.

The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) and its faculty members identified gaps in most undergraduate curriculum related to cancer care.

In 2017, the ONS Board approved basic core competencies that all nurses should have upon completion of their undergraduate curriculum.

- Review the impact of cancer on individuals, caregivers, and society.
- Describe how cancer cells differ from normal cells (cell cycle, immunology, targets).
- Understand genetic, environmental, and behavioral risk factors for cancer.
- Use evidence to reduce risk and promote cancer screening practices.
- Understand diagnosis, staging, and classification of tumors that direct treatment, management, and survivorship care.
- Describe the goals of treatment and four pillars of cancer therapy.
- Apply evidence-based strategies to assess, manage, and monitor cancer-related symptoms.
- Explain the transformational impact of cancer nursing practice on patient outcomes and the patient/caregiver experience.
- Participate as a member of the interprofessional team in planning and coordinating care for people

ONS offers an online Cancer Basics course and Cancer Basics textbook. These tools cover cancer biology, treatments, symptom management, and patient and family care.

ONS is developing an online cancer curriculum that faculty can customize to fit their needs. This includes a faculty handbook.