
EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION OF NURSES CARING FOR OLDER PEOPLE WITH CANCER: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

JACKIE BRIDGES, YVONNE WENGSTRÖM, AND DONALD E. BAILEY JR

OBJECTIVES: *To review the education available in Europe and the US for nurses caring for older people with cancer.*

DATA SOURCES: *Nursing literature, published guidelines, and professional nursing organizations Websites.*

CONCLUSION: *The educational needs of nurses caring for older cancer patients have not been well defined to date, resulting in a mixed international picture of preparation.*

IMPLICATION FOR NURSING PRACTICE: *As the number of older people with cancer grows, the resulting complexities of patient and family care needs have significant implications for the role of nursing.*

KEY WORDS: *gero-oncology, nursing education, nursing practice, aged, oncology nursing, education.*

Jackie Bridges, PhD, MSN, BNurs(Hons), RN: *Professor of Older People's Care, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Southampton, UK.* Yvonne Wengström, OCN™, PhD: *Professor of Nursing, Division of Nursing, Karolinska Institutet and Department of Oncology, Karolinska University Hospital, Sweden.* Donald E. Bailey Jr., PhD, RN, FAAN: *Associate Professor of Nursing & Claire M. Fagin Fellow, Duke University School of Nursing, Durham, NC.*

Address correspondence to Jackie Bridges, PhD, MSN, BNurs(Hons), RN, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Southampton, Nightingale Building, Highfield Campus, Southampton SO17 1BJ, UK. E-mail: jackie.bridges@soton.ac.uk

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
0749-2081

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.soncn.2015.11.003>

Cancer is a major health challenge for older people. Nurses have a critical role in maintaining optimal health and quality of life for older people and families through their cancer journey. However, insufficient attention has been given to the development of a nursing workforce that is able to provide this support. Ensuring the “right staff, right place, right time, right skills” with the growing needs of an ageing population have created a global crisis in the health workforce across health care specialties, including oncology.¹ Education is an important part of the solution to this crisis, but there is a lack of agreement as to how nursing should meet these

challenges. This article reviews educational opportunities for nurses in Europe and the United States and provides recommendations for the nursing workforce to develop further competencies in caring for older people with cancer.

Older adults with cancer are more likely to have comorbidities and other problems associated with their age, such as dementia, depression, stroke, diabetes, and problems related to continence, nutrition, risk of falls, functional decline, polypharmacy, and delirium,² which may affect their response to treatment, the need to modify their treatment plan, and the supportive care that is needed. Older adults are a heterogeneous group and require a comprehensive assessment to tailor their treatment and plan of care. Their families are also more likely to need psychosocial support during and perhaps beyond the cancer treatment trajectory.³⁻⁵ Nurses play a leading role in ensuring that these elements of care are in place. However, they require skills and knowledge of common clinical issues that occur in old age to enable them to help the patient and family develop goals for treatment, care, and quality of life. Education should include knowledge of cancers common in older patients including breast, prostate, gastrointestinal, and lung, the pathophysiology of these cancers, review of common chemotherapy regimens, and evidenced-based nursing interventions for older patients and families.⁶

There is a need to consider the educational needs of specialist nurses working with older patients with cancer because they will most likely provide support to people with the most complex needs. However, there are few examples internationally of nurses working in a specialist gero-oncology capacity. In France, for instance, the concept of specialist geriatric oncology clinics and the key role of specialist nursing in care and support of older cancer patients are well established in a number of centers. In the UK and Sweden, the nurse specialist role tends to be defined by tumor type, and so services, including nursing, that focus specifically on older cancer patients, are a rarity. In African countries, there is little public or professional awareness of the issues related to the older adult with cancer, and specialist services have not been developed.⁷ Internationally, nursing has a role to play in the provision of specialty services but the gerontological nursing specialist role for the older cancer patient has not been well defined to date.

With regard to educational provision, gerontological nursing and oncology nursing have tended to be taught separately from each other both in un-

dergraduate and graduate programs. Given that there are existing concerns about a lack of consistent undergraduate education focused on either of these fields, it is likely that pre-licensure nursing students may not be exposed to the need for the integration of skills and knowledge from both fields together.⁸⁻¹⁰ In continuing education, there is greater potential for an integrated approach and the development of specialist roles that encompass oncology and gerontology. However, this review identified limited educational provision that specifically supports nurse specialist roles in gero-oncology. In Europe, there are some specific postgraduate courses ranging from 2- to 3-day courses to full tertiary programs with diplomas, targeted at a range of professionals including nurses.⁷ There are also some online resources freely available on the Internet and targeted at health care professionals.¹¹ In the US and a few other countries, as detailed below, nurses working in organizations registered with the Nurses Improving Care of Health System Elders (NICHE) program, can access educational resources on nursing older people with cancer. However, these resources are not available across the nursing workforce and a lack of published research means it is not known if nurses access them and, if they do, their impact on nursing practice. Given that gero-oncological nurse specialist roles are relatively rare, it is perhaps not surprising that educational provision in this field of nursing is in its infancy.

The following sections review examples from Europe and the US that discuss positive changes in nursing education and care for older patients with cancer.

EUROPE

In many European countries, the role of nursing in gerontological oncology care is well recognized by patient groups and specialist teams. However, workforce planning within health services often neglects the skill and education required to provide such support for patients with cancer and their families.¹² Cancer care is becoming more complex with the changing and increasing complexity of comorbid conditions, which is demanding a wider range of skills and critical thinking among nurses working in gerontological oncology.¹³ Social and economic pressures are also influencing education in Europe with the move of nursing pre-licensure courses into higher education.¹⁴ A range of key

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2676435>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2676435>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)