

Nurse Education and Survivorship

Building the specialty through training and program development

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BACKGROUND: As the number of cancer survivors in the United States continues to grow, the need to educate healthcare providers in the components of survivorship care remains a challenge in the current healthcare system. Survivors have unique concerns and follow-up requirements that are key to minimizing their risks for recurrence and supporting quality of life.

OBJECTIVES: This article describes the impact of the curriculum, faculty, and teaching methods for an educational program to prepare nurses to provide cancer survivorship care.

METHODS: Mixed methods with quantitative and qualitative approaches were used.

FINDINGS: Course content and faculty received high scores in the evaluations. Analysis of the most common goals implemented by participants after the course focused on providing professional education, planning the process for survivorship care, and implementing treatment summaries and survivorship care plans.

KEYWORDS

cancer survivorship; nurse education; quality improvement; guidelines

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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A CANCER SURVIVOR IS DESCRIBED AS “an individual from the time of diagnosis through the balance of his or her life” (National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship, 2017, p. 1). Family members, friends, and caregivers are also affected by the survivorship experience and are, therefore, included in this definition (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2005a). The healthcare challenges related to caring for this survivor population were described in a seminal report titled *From Cancer Patient to Cancer Survivor: Lost in Transition* (IOM, 2005a, 2005b). As the number of cancer survivors increases, the need to provide care that maximizes health and quality of life for this population is essential. As healthcare settings evolve and groups grapple with this unique period of care and the growing needs of survivors, nurses are frequently the group called on to perform these services and to develop formal survivorship care programs (George Washington University Cancer Center, 2015; Grant, Economou, Ferrell, & Uman, 2012; Lester, Wessels, & Jung, 2014; Mayer, Birken, Check, & Chen, 2015; McCabe, Faithfull, Makin, & Wengstrom, 2013; Shapiro et al., 2016). Therefore, continuing education efforts are needed to prepare nurses for survivorship care, particularly because, to date, survivorship care is taught in very few professional education programs nationally (Klemp, Frazier, Glennon, Truneczek, & Irwin, 2011; Lester et al., 2014; Mayer, Nasso, & Earp, 2017). To initiate changes needed in the healthcare system to provide for this survivor population, the IOM (now the Health and Medicine Division of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine) report provided a number of key recommendations, one of which proposed the creation of educational opportunities to prepare healthcare providers to meet the needs of cancer survivors (IOM, 2005b). In response to this recommendation, a National Cancer Institute–funded R-25 education program was developed and titled Preparing Professional Nurses for Cancer Survivorship Care. This article will describe the program, including the curriculum content used to prepare nurses to develop, deliver, and maintain survivorship programs; identify the teaching methods used; report on the selection of participants; and summarize the evaluations of four nationwide courses occurring annually.

Curriculum Content

Although many organizations define cancer survivorship as beginning at the time of diagnosis, the authors chose to focus their curriculum content on