

Overview and Experience of a Nursing e-Mentorship Program

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Little is known regarding the feasibility and efficacy of an online continuing education program for oncology nurses. The Multiple Myeloma Mentorship Program, a quality improvement project for the Institute for Medical Education and Research, was designed to meet the educational needs of oncology nurses caring for patients with multiple myeloma. Twenty-five expert nurses with expertise in multiple myeloma from 23 cancer centers in the United States partnered with 50 oncology nurses in an electronic format from July 2009 to January 2010. The purpose of the program was to educate oncology nurses about the latest treatments and strategies for optimal side-effect management for patients with multiple myeloma. Nurse mentees selected their preferred form of learning—webcast, in-person speaker, or monograph. Two live webcasts allowed for didactic discussion between mentors and mentees. During and after the program, mentors conducted informal, unscripted interviews with nurse participants to determine preferred learning format, challenges, and implications for practice. Twelve nurses preferred Web-based learning to in-person presentations, citing flexibility and convenience as reasons for that choice. Time constraints with Web-based and in-person learning were a barrier to nurse mentees completing assigned modules. Several nurses implemented practice changes as a result of the program. Nurses who participated in the mentorship program were satisfied with the content. Learning styles and format should be considered in future mentorship programs.

The field of cancer nursing is evolving continually. New therapeutic agents have been developed since 2000, which provide additional treatment opportunities for patients. Integral to the success of patients and their tolerance to therapy is the support of nurses. These individuals are in the unique position to educate patients about anticipated side effects and intervene when appropriate. For nurses, the first step in managing side effects is an understanding of the disease process and medications that are given to treat the illness.

Nurse educators are employed at many hospitals and in community settings to furnish programs that provide continuing nursing education (CNE), which is an important component of maintaining certification in the field of oncology nursing. Prior research has shown that mentoring programs can successfully bridge novice or junior members of a profession with experienced or established members (Miller, Devaney, Kelly, & Kuehn, 2008). Because of time and geographic constraints, an e-mentoring (i.e., online mentoring) program in a previous oncology nursing

At a Glance

- ◆ Learning about the diagnosis and management of specific cancers can be challenging for nurses.
- ◆ Time to complete learning modules independently may be limited by personal and work responsibilities.
- ◆ Various learning styles and levels of education need to be considered when creating future mentorship programs.

study was found to be effective (Miller et al., 2008). Nurses who attended oncology education programs sponsored by the Institute for Medical Education and Research (IMER) were asked what topics they would like to learn more about. Respondents stated they wanted more CNE that focused on the care of patients with multiple myeloma (MM). The current study's author developed an e-mentorship program to address that established need for CNE, focusing on the side effects and management of patients with MM.

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