



# Oncology Nursing – Expanded Role

R Thassu

**O**ncology Nurse or cancer care Nurse provides her major professional role in promotion of health, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation. Cancer care requires multi-disciplinary team and Oncology Nurse is a key member of the team. The Nurse has the expressive role of co-ordinating activities and helping patients and families mobilise their resources to cope up with the disease and psychological stress. The Nurse plays a significant role in helping the patient to accept the physician's medical plan of care, to tolerate the necessary diagnostic and treatment measures, to derive the greatest benefit from treatment, and to return to the most satisfying level of living that is possible.

## Scope of Oncology Nursing

In addition to clinical practice, consultation, education and administration, Oncology Nursing encompasses her active participation in Nursing research also.

## Functions of Oncology Nurse

An Oncology Nurse with her basic or post basic preparation in Nursing and specialised training in Oncology functions in multiple areas/settings. The primary objective of the Oncology Nurse is to facilitate the maximum functions of the patient and his/her family throughout the disease process. She exercises her expertise in academic medical centres, community Oncology units, outpatient and inpatient departments, Oncologist's office and finally home care programmes.

She also contributes as an important member of the Oncology team in areas of bone marrow transplantation, radiation therapy, surgical Oncology, community education and prevention programmes and recently developed genetic risk counselling.

*Author: Chief of Nursing Services, Batra Hospital and Medical Research Centre, Department of Nursing Education and Administration, New Delhi.*

She is totally involved and is responsible for co-ordination and delivery of care, collaboration with members of health care team, patient and family education in the home setting. Her functions also involve direct Nursing care, co-ordination, consultation, education, administration and research which has equal importance in this area of Nursing. An expanded role of Nurse as an Oncology Nurse in providing emotional support and emotional counselling to an individual is of vital importance. By virtue of her specialised training in Oncology Nursing, she has the advantage of being regarded by the patient as trust worthy person, having authority to give instructions and advice. She will assess and discuss with her team members the practical and emotional concerns of the patient. Psychological distresses must be managed in such a manner that an individual complies with the treatment. The emotional support bolsters self esteem and enables the patient with cancer to feel valued and cared for. It is common for cancer patients to feel helpless and awesome, as they are taken over by an illness, over which they have no control. Most often these feelings extend to families. Many cancer patients require increasing practical help in dealing with the exigencies of their disease.

The cancer patients who do not require or cannot afford long hospitalisation need to be provided home health facilities. Technological advancements have made possible better pain management, along with the administration of therapies such as chemotherapy, intravenous infusions, nutritious diet at home in a more convenient fashion which were provided exclusively at hospitals. A knowledgeable home care Nurse or a visiting Nurse who has undergone course of specialisation in Oncology, in her community health programme can provide specific services such as Nursing at home, health aids, physical care, catheterization etc. in addition to advanced Nursing procedures.

A community health Nurse with her specialised preparation of Oncology has special role in patient and family education than Oncologists. Patients ask questions at ease from the Nurses as they feel, his doctor is too busy to be bothered.

## Expanded role of the Nurses as a patient educator

The most difficult task Oncology Nurse has to face is speaking the truth to the patient about his illness. Although truth speaking is important but it is more important to know, how and whom to disclose the truth. As an Oncology Nurse, she needs to alter behavioural skills that require training and experience. An Oncology Nurse shall encourage the patient to ask questions so that she can promote an individualised approach that benefits patients and provide honest answers to the questions which a patient asks.

She has a significant role in helping the patient to accept and tolerate the necessary diagnostic and treatment measures up to the most satisfying level of living. The complete health team, the patient and his family is under tremendous emotional stress, while caring for a cancer patient, a Nurse in her expanded role as an Oncology Nurse helps, assists, and puts maximum efforts to improve communication, share concerns and accepts his aggressive behaviour and helps to cope with losses and recognise accomplishments.

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