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Identifying the role of nurse's in chemotherapy wards of cancer units in selected hospital of Pune district

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Abstract

Introduction: Oncology ward nurses work in various cancer units and fulfil various roles in the field of nursing care that were unheard of many years back.

Methodology: The purpose of the study was to identify the roles of the chemotherapy nurses through a survey. Six reputed hospitals in Maharashtra were selected as setting of the study. Data collection period was from 21st March 2022 to Jan 2023. 50 nurses from chemotherapy ward using purposive sampling method were participants of the study.

Results: All nurses [100%], strongly agreed to the nurse's role of administrator, regarding role of educator, all nurses [100%], strongly agreed to this role of the nurse. 90% of nurses strongly agreed to the role of nurses as an imparter of information, 92% of nurses strongly agreed to the role of nurses as provider of psychological or emotional support.

Conclusion: The nurses form the last link in the chain of health care providers in the providing cancer treatment and thus have an utmost responsibility for detection of error and support of treatment of patients before commencement of therapy.

Keywords: Chemotherapy cycle, cancer, treatment

Introduction

Cancer is an ugly enemy and currently the second leading cause of death in the world.

The oncology nurse while performing her duties, build a strong relationship with their patients. As the oncology patient has frequent appointments and at time is for long term care, the nurses can have the opportunity for building a special bond with the patient. "Come again for your next cycle of chemotherapy" these are the most commonly words spoken by the nurse to the patient who has completed his present cycle and in going home or getting discharged, these are words of trust, care, assurance and responsibility and identifying the various roles they accomplish in cancer patient's life. Throughout the infusion of chemotherapy, the nurse is at the patient's bedside and the patient looks forward to the nurse for attending and solving any problems pertaining to chemotherapy.

The roles and responsibilities of nurses of working in cancer units have changed rapidly over the past century from nurses providing bedside care to advanced practice oncology nurses taking responsibility for assisting and performing invasive procedures along with diagnostic interpretation and screening for cancer prevention. The future of oncology nurse is bright^[1]. As the nurses play a crucial Role, along with it come the responsibility of the cancer patients within that role they play.

Responsibility of the nurse regarding administrating Intravenous chemotherapy

As nurses are present during the therapy even before the doctor arrives, the nurse carries on the responsibilities of making sure the patient, family and caregivers are well informed about the treatment and administration procedure in the language understandable by them. Taking written consent for the procedure and documenting as per the hospital policy. Doing the necessary laboratory investigation prior to procedure. Checking to see if all medications are brought as per the doctor's prescription; or making sure the indent is being done for the medication. Storing the medication; Assessment of the patient prior to therapy for his mental and physical fitness; Seeing to it that the therapy and treatment begins in timely manner with all necessary safety measures. Continuous assessment and observation throughout the procedure; Managing the immediate and long term effects related to the treatment^[2]. The Nurses have an integral role throughout the patient's stay in the hospital.

Not only does the nurses cater to the need of medication, but also to the needs of personal hygiene, diet, recreational activities, rest and sleep, exercise, family time, spiritual needs and emotional needs as well.

Requirements for fulfilling the Role of chemotherapy/oncology nurse

In-order to work in oncology ward or work as a chemotherapy nurse, the nurses have to undergo appropriate training and be authorised to administer therapies. She should be proficient to perform the designated role and functions. The nurses should have appropriate knowledge and skill base, should be Registered with the state council or Indian Nursing Council. Lastly be Competent to handle equipment's and devices such as computers, infusion pumps, to ensure efficient delivery of cancer treatment [2].

This study aims to explore the roles and experiences of nurses in chemotherapy wards, which can contribute to improving patient care, nursing practice, and interdisciplinary collaboration in cancer units.

Title of article: "Identifying the Role of nurse's in chemotherapy wards of Cancer units in selected hospital of Pune district"

Objective

- Identify the role of nurses in chemotherapy wards of cancer units.
- Determine the challenges faced by nurses in chemotherapy wards.

Assumption

- **Nurses play a vital role in chemotherapy care:** The study assumes that nurses are essential members of the healthcare team in chemotherapy wards and contribute significantly to patient care.
- **Nurses have varying levels of experience and knowledge:** The study assumes that nurses working in chemotherapy wards have different levels of experience, knowledge, and skills in chemotherapy care.
- The nurses knowingly and unknowingly, fulfil different roles in the life of the cancer patient.

Materials & Methods

In the present study the Research approach adopted was Quantitative approach.

Study design: The research design used is Descriptive study design.

Setting: The settings for the study were oncology wards of selected hospital of Pune district.

Participants: The Researcher has collected data from sample consisting of 50 nurses working as nurse managers, in-charges of chemotherapy ward, using non-probability convenient sampling method.

Variables

Dependent Variable: Role of nurses

Independent variables: Nurses characteristics and Hospital characteristics.

Data sources/measurement

The time period of data collection was 21 March 2022 to

Jan 2023.

Tool for data collection

Section I= Sociodemographic data consist of Age, Gender, Position in the ward and duration of work experience of respondents.

Section II= Rating scale for identifying role of nurse.

Appropriate samples for the study group was selected using purposive sampling technique, and the participants were put in one group.

Sample size: 50 nurses

Inclusion criteria: The inclusion criteria for selecting the samples were nurses working in oncology wards and holding the position of nurse managers, in charge and shift in charges.

Exclusion criteria: Nurses who are not present at the time of data collection.

Quantitative variables

Section I= Socio demographic data it consists of personal information such as name, age, gender, professional qualification, year of experience, duration of work

Section II= Rating Scale used consisting of 22 questions. Nurses working in oncology ward were participants.

Statistical methods: Inferential and descriptive statistics were used.

Results

The participants were 50 registered nurses working in chemotherapy wards from selected hospitals of Pune district. Descriptive data consisted of respondent's name, age, gender, and professional qualification, year of experience and duration of work. There was no association found with any of the demographic variables. Respondents identified the role of nurses in chemotherapy ward of cancer unit. The socio demographic data states that majority (64%) of the respondents were in the age group of 46-60 years and 36% were in the age group of 25-45 years. 90% respondents were females and 10% were males. Position held by the respondent in oncology wards were 42% their position was shift in-charge, 30% were nurse's managers, 28% were ward in-charges.

Regarding duration of work experience in oncology ward 52% were working since more than 10 years and 48% were working for less than 10 years in oncology wards.

Table 1: Depicts the demographic data of oncology nurses in chemotherapy wards. n=50

Criteria	f	%
Age of Respondents		
25-45 years	18	36%
46-60 years	32	64%
Gender of Respondents		
Female	45	90%
Male	5	10%
Position of Respondents		
Ward in charge	14	28%
Shift in charge	21	42%
Nurse managers	15	30%
Respondents duration of work experience in oncology ward		
<10 years	24	48%
>10 years	26	52%

The findings of the present study showed that 80% of nurses strongly agreed and 20% just agreed that nurses assess the patient before chemotherapy. 96% nurses strongly agreed to monitoring of patient before and during the chemotherapy is the role of nurse whereas only 4% just agreed to this role. All nurses [100%], strongly agreed to the nurse's role of administrator. 60% agreed and 40% of nurses strongly agreed to the role of managing the side effects experienced by patient during chemotherapy, where as 20% nurses disagreed to this role of the nurse. 76% agreed and 16% of nurses strongly agreed to nurses role as evaluator of care where as 8% of nurses disagreed to this being the nurse's role. Regarding role of educator, all nurses [100%], strongly

agreed to this role of the nurse. 90% of nurses strongly agreed to the role of nurses as an imparter of information to the chemotherapy patient, whereas 10% agreed to this being the nurse's role. 92% of nurses strongly agreed to the role of nurses as provider of psychological or emotional support to the patient during care, where as 8% agreed to nurses role as providing psychological support. The role of advocate to patient care, 80% nurses strongly agreed to this role, whereas 20% agreed to this being the role of the nurse. 76% of nurses strongly agreed to nurses involved in many other complex role besides patient care, whereas 24% agreed to the complex role of nurses. (Table no. 2)

Table 2: Depicts the Role of oncology nurses towards patient care in chemotherapy wards, n=50

Role Identified	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Assessor of patient	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Monitoring	96%	4%	0%	0%	0%
Administrator	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Managing side effects	60%	20%	0%	20%	0%
Evaluator of care	76%	16%	0%	8%	0%
Educator to the patient	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Imparter of information	90%	10%	0%	0%	0%
Provider of psychological support	92%	8%	0%	0%	0%
Advocate of patient	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Complex role	76%	24%	0%	0%	0%

The overall findings of the study states that most of the nurses strongly agree the various roles of nurses related to patient care during chemotherapy. Respondents identified the role of nurses in chemotherapy ward of cancer unit.

Other analyses: Inferential and descriptive statistics were used.

Discussion

The nurses are an integral part in patient care. From the time of admission of patient till discharge, every aspect the nurses help the patient. The various roles the nurses fulfil are identified through the survey.

Administration of Chemotherapy: The important role of nurse is to administer chemotherapy. Before the administration of the chemotherapy drugs, the nurse reviews the 10 rights of drug administration, does the assessment of the patient, including the blood test such as haematocrit level, haemoglobin, white blood cells and platelets. The patient is also assessed for his mental status and any signs of infection or bleeding. The nurse prepares for handling any type of complications. Keeps all necessary articles and emergency equipment ready at patient's bedside. The nurse accurately calculates the chemotherapy drugs to be infused based as per patient's body surface area and confirms the method of administration. Selection of appropriate of peripheral vein is done by nurses. Throughout the infusion the nurses monitor the patient, record the procedure and reports when necessary [3].

Imparting knowledge: One of the very important roles of the nurse is to provide information to the patient, his family and the caregivers regarding all aspects of the treatment, for which the nurses should be very resourceful [3].

Educating the patient: Right from the time of admission till the discharge the nurse carries on educating the patients regarding medication, diet, rest and sleep, exercise, personal hygiene follow-up etc [3].

Assessment & monitoring: The nurse's role is to monitor the effectiveness and side effects of all pharmacologic interventions, respiratory status, function of the bowel, mental and cognitive functions [4].

Managing side effects: Nurses during their care triage the patient's problems and assist in the evaluation of symptoms faced by their patients and also initiate appropriate interventions. Nurses also teach patient regarding home management of the symptoms [5].

Psychological support: Nurses are able to monitor the patient's psychological coping and distress during their working phase. It is a part of holistic patient perspective and allows patient to seek emotional support throughout their journey of cancer. The role of nurse is to provide a comfortable setting to the patient in which he feels safe to relate and communicate [6].

Patients Advocacy: Patients advocacy is important aspect of nursing profession. Nurses play a vital role in policy making which depends on their experience and insights. Nurses throughout their professional development learn to be an advocate on behalf of the patient under their care. This advocacy role of a nurse is not only limited to oncology but beyond this care [7].

Complex role: The role of oncology nurses has expanded over the years due to sophisticated treatment and the growth of targeted therapies ensuring the nurses are well- educated and independent thinkers. The focus of cancer care nurses is on patient assessment, education, symptom management and supportive care. There are multiple roles of nurses and therefore it is complex [8]. Nurses work with a multidisciplinary team and therefore it's a team effort. Coordinating the care is another key role of the nurse.

A study conducted to describe the contemporary role of oncology nurse in the entire cancer shared decision making process. 30 each nurses and nurse practitioners were included. The major themes identified were: oncology nurse

have various roles at different time points and settings of cancer. The other themes of oncology nurses were shared decision making process, patient education, advocacy, treatment and side effects management. The nurses, in addition value their participation in cancer shared decision making process, believe they have a voice, level of knowledge and can influence their participation in shared decision making process which is dynamic [7].

Study done by Ahongshangbam Mahen Singh and Archala K, on quality of life of chemotherapy patient, the findings reveal that 87.3% of patients were with moderate impairment, 10.7% with severe impairment and 2% with mild impairment and therefore these patients require continuous support and care at the time of their treatment. [9]. A study conducted on chemotherapy nurses to look for evidence for nurse led services and discusses the competencies and skill required. It also discusses the common side effects of treatment and their management, common toxicity criteria to guide assessment. Lastly it outlines a new initiative of acute oncology services that have enhanced not only the quality of services but the safety of patients receiving chemotherapy.

With the rise in patients detected with cancer and various complex therapies, the need for advanced practice nurses arises. The future oncology nurses will be required to become comfortable and flexible with changing technology. This can be achieved by updating the nursing curriculum and enhancing education of nurses working in cancer units.

Implication

- **Improved patient care:** Understanding the roles and challenges of nurses in chemotherapy wards can inform strategies to enhance patient care and outcomes.
- **Nursing practice:** Identifying the perceptions and experiences of nurses can inform nursing education, policy, and practice.
- **Interdisciplinary collaboration:** Highlighting the importance of teamwork in chemotherapy care can promote collaboration between nurses, doctors, and other healthcare professionals.

Conclusion

Chemotherapy nurses have been much respected for their technical competency, information-giving, and communication skills. Most recently, chemotherapy nurses have been developing assessment and management skills for supporting patients through their chemotherapeutic pathway. Nurses play a vital role in administration of chemotherapy. Throughout the cancer journey nurses are with the patients in administration drugs, managing side effects, assessment and continuous monitoring of the patient, educating, providing information, advocacy of patient and providing psychological support.

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Conflicts of interest: The Author has no any conflict of Interest.

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