
Use of Exemplars

Identification of best practices in cancer prevention and screening

Colleen O'Leary, DNP, RN, AOCNS®



BACKGROUND: Prevention strategies help to teach what individuals can do to potentially offset cancer risks. Screenings can detect cancer at earlier stages, allowing for earlier treatments and better outcomes.

OBJECTIVES: This article seeks to identify best practices in cancer prevention and screening.

METHODS: This article presents exemplars in oncology nursing that illustrate implementation of best practices for cancer prevention and screening.

FINDINGS: Oncology nurses are well situated to not only provide education about prevention activities, but also to encourage participation in recommended screenings. Implementation of evidence-based practice, along with the nurses' clinical knowledge and patient preferences, allows for the best outcomes for patients. The use of exemplars is an ideal way of telling nurses' stories to share their experiences and how they affected patient outcomes.

KEYWORDS

prevention; screening; early detection; nursing; best practice

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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BEST PRACTICE IS DEFINED AS "A PROCEDURE that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption" (Merriam-Webster, 2019). In the early 1970s, this concept of best practice made its way into health care. At that time, the U.S. and Canadian governments published best practices for certain healthcare areas as a means of ensuring better quality (Nelson, 2014). The understanding of what constitutes quality health care further became evident with the emergence of evidence-based practice concepts, advances in healthcare technologies, and a shift in healthcare reimbursements from quantity to quality. In a study by Nelson (2014), a more concise concept of best practice and quality in nursing was developed. Three main attributes of best practice emerged. These included being directive, evidence-based, and quality-focused. Being directive involves giving discrete direction or guidance of what should be completed. Evidence-based practice is a problem-solving approach to health care that incorporates best evidence from research, the clinical expertise of the clinician, and patient preference (Melnik & Fineout-Overholt, 2019). Quality is the degree to which a practice increases the likelihood that the desired outcomes will occur (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2020). Best practices are important because they serve as a framework to elicit the best outcomes with minimal failure. The use of evidence-based best practices is critical to oncology nurses and patients. The Institute of Medicine (2013) stated that quality cancer care should integrate evidence-based practice to continually improve care. To reduce cancer risks and mortality and morbidity rates, oncology nurses question clinical practices. By incorporating evidence-based best practices into clinical practice, oncology nurses can improve patients' quality of life and outcomes. One way to highlight these best practices is through the use of exemplars.

Use of Exemplars

Clinical exemplars are a way to demonstrate and capture the nature of nursing best practice. The American Association of Critical Care Nurses (n.d.) stated that the purpose of an exemplar is to communicate nurses' and nursing's contributions and accomplishments. The American Association of Critical Care Nurses (n.d.) further clarified that an exemplar is a story, not a case study or report. An exemplar is written so that others can learn from the experience of the writer. The following exemplars will demonstrate best practices that are community-based, healthcare system-based, and academic center-based.