A Nurse’s Responsibility

A great deal of information has emerged recently about cancer, including its incidence, contributing factors, and recommended lifestyle changes. As oncology nurses, our obligation to stay abreast of practice changes tends to focus our attention on articles and conferences about new drugs and treatments. Yet, as nurses, we also have a responsibility to contribute to the dialogue in this country on decreasing the incidence of cancer.

Cancer now has replaced heart disease as the number-one killer of Americans under the age of 85. The American Cancer Society (2005) reports that 476,009 Americans died from cancer in 2002 compared to 450,637 who died from heart disease. This is primarily because the drop in smoking rates has lowered death rates from heart disease. Although death rates from lung and colorectal cancer are dropping, more than 570,280 cancer deaths are expected in 2005. Obviously, we have a long way to go.

How can we impact these statistics in any way? It is becoming increasingly clear that obesity is linked to a number of cancers—colorectal, breast, esophageal, and liver, to name a few. Lippman and Levin (2005) stated that obesity is the largest avoidable cause of cancer mortality, responsible for 90,000 cancer deaths annually in the United States. The fact that obesity is rising in this country is no surprise to anyone. As oncology nurses, our obligation to keep up with the literature on all kinds of topics, not just clinical oncology, The Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing (CJON) will try to help you remain current with diseases and treatments other than cancer with some new columns.

As nurses, we also have a responsibility to contribute to the dialogue in this country on decreasing the incidence of cancer.

References

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/05.CJON.143