Hospital stays are becoming shorter, and care is increasingly technical, fragmented, and impersonal; therefore, recognizing patient psychosocial needs in a timely manner is critical (Gosselin, Crane-Okada, Irwin, Tringali, & Wenzel, 2011; Keller et al., 2004; Pasacreta, Kenefick, & McCorkle, 2008). Between 30%-50% of patients with cancer experience psychosocial distress (Gosselin et al., 2011; Keller et al., 2004). Patients report having unmet psychosocial needs and a desire for support at varied phases of their cancer treatment (Absolom et al., 2011). The National Comprehensive Cancer Network has suggested that psychosocial distress be considered the sixth vital sign (Holland & Bultz, 2007). Nursing is a trusted profession, and the amount of time nurses spend with patients make them well positioned to play a key role in assessing patients and intervening to minimize psychosocial needs (Pasacreta et al., 2008).

The Institute of Medicine (2007) emphasized the importance of meeting the psychosocial needs of patients with cancer, but stressed that education regarding how to best approach those psychosocial needs. Therefore, the purpose of this survey was to determine the educational needs of inpatient oncology nurses in terms of providing psychosocial care to patients and to determine the barriers that inpatient nurses experience when providing psychosocial care. Twenty-six inpatient oncology RNs participated in an online survey that assessed barriers to psychosocial care as well as educational needs. Nurses identified that time, lack of patient privacy, nurses’ emotional energy, confusion about clinical guidelines, lack of experience with screening tools, not knowing how to approach sensitive topics, and poor communication between team members undermine psychosocial care. Inpatient nurses need additional training to provide excellent psychosocial care.

Patients with cancer have multiple psychosocial needs during inpatient admissions. However, nurses often are not sure how to best approach those psychosocial needs. Therefore, the purpose of this survey was to determine the educational needs of inpatient oncology nurses in terms of providing psychosocial care to patients and to determine the barriers that inpatient nurses experience when providing psychosocial care. Twenty-six inpatient oncology RNs participated in an online survey that assessed barriers to psychosocial care as well as educational needs. Nurses identified that time, lack of patient privacy, nurses’ emotional energy, confusion about clinical guidelines, lack of experience with screening tools, not knowing how to approach sensitive topics, and poor communication between team members undermine psychosocial care. Inpatient nurses need additional training to provide excellent psychosocial care.

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