Staffing needs in an ambulatory oncology infusion setting can be challenging. The workload of nurses and time required to provide patient care are increasing. With the addition of new targeted therapies and complicated treatment regimens, increased patient acuity should be considered when determining daily staffing. This article describes the development of an acuity tool based on the complexity of patient treatments. The first part of the process focused on development of the tool and data collection during a two-month period to assess the complexity of patient treatments. The second part used the tool to determine daily staffing for infusion rooms. The tool provides a better representation of acuity in infusion rooms by connecting the complexity of patient treatments with staffing on a daily basis. In addition, the tool is easily adaptable to changing oncology treatment regimens because it provides a basis for assessing treatment complexity in the infusion room.

At a Glance

- Establishing and using an acuity tool that represents the complexity of patients fosters the equitable distribution of nursing staff and increases nurse satisfaction.
- Continual evaluation and revision of the tool are important as treatments and the environment change.
- A well-formulated acuity tool with information continually being collected and maintained can assist with a variety of decisions, including rearranging existing and hiring new staff.

The purpose of this article is to describe the development of an acuity tool for staffing based on the complexity of patient treatments in an ambulatory oncology setting. The desired outcomes of the implementation of the tool were to improve use of nursing resources and to increase nurse satisfaction and retention.

The ambulatory oncology setting discussed in this article is a large, private oncology practice. At the time of the development of the acuity tool, the practice included 11 clinics across southeastern Wisconsin. Sixteen practicing physicians and approximately 60 nurses, including an internal float pool of 5 nurses who worked throughout the 11 clinics, served patients.

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