Genetics and Genomics

An oncology nurse’s journey in practice

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BACKGROUND: Cancer genetics and genomics are now an integral component of oncology care. Genetics and genomics guide recommendations not only for cancer prevention and early detection, but also for cancer treatment.

OBJECTIVES: This article documents the personal experiences of an oncology nurse who has worked in cancer prevention and early detection since the 1990s and describes the many changes that have occurred in cancer-related genetic and genomic care during that time.

METHODS: This is a personal account of genetic practice in the past 30 years.

FINDINGS: Nurses can no longer ignore cancer genetics and genomics in oncology care. Some aspects of care have changed dramatically, including the number of genetic tests and potential uses for genomic information; however, some remain the same, particularly the human component of care. Patients and families need comprehensive education and support to understand the role that genetics and genomics play in cancer care. Oncology nurses are well suited to provide this care.

KEYWORDS
genetics; genomics; cancer prevention; early detection

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