

Advocating for Quality Cancer Care: Making Evidence-Based Practice a Reality

Kathi H. Mooney, RN, PhD, FAAN, AOCN®

Purpose/Objectives: To highlight oncology nurses as innovators who evaluate published data, develop new skills, and incorporate current knowledge into practice.

Data Sources: Published articles and book chapters.

Data Synthesis: Established methods of synthesizing knowledge that can be used to evaluate data and identify areas of innovation. Oncology nurses can influence the adoption of new ideas into their practice. As healthcare evolves, oncology nurses need to adapt and refine their skills.

Conclusions: Oncology nurses and oncology practices will need to demonstrate their value in the future healthcare paradigm. Oncology nurses must think more broadly about their roles.

Implications for Nursing Practice: Nurses should incorporate evidence-based techniques into their practice. Oncology nurses should identify and begin obtaining the skills needed to continue offering high-quality patient care as healthcare systems evolve.

Key Points . . .

- ▶ The healthcare landscape is changing, and oncology nurses have the opportunity to expand their sphere of influence.
- ▶ A commitment must be made to adopt an evidence-based approach to oncology care.
- ▶ Nurses must identify the skills needed to integrate critical thinking into their practice.
- ▶ Nurses can apply these skills to influence others to adopt a similar approach.

practice from an evidence base can be acquired. Clinicians can begin to develop and refine these skills through a three-part process that includes (a) making the commitment to adopt an evidence-based approach to oncology care, (b) identifying the skills needed to integrate critical thinking into an evidence-based practice, and (c) applying those skills and influencing others to adopt a similar approach so that the overall quality of care is improved.

Commitment to an Evidence-Based Practice

The first step in creating an evidence-based practice is to accept the fact that the evolving healthcare environment will require oncology nurses to rethink and retool their approach to delivering care. Rather than resisting change, the focus should be on finding the opportunities inherent in this evolving system. In the introduction to a text on healthcare leadership and change, Collins (1999) offered four guidelines that oncology nurses can use to integrate change.

- Clearly define and then preserve core purposes and values (i.e., the core values of oncology nursing). Although many things must change, be clear about the essential contributions of nursing. Retain these core values while adopting new approaches and roles.
- Do not limit possibilities by confining the range of choices to nonnegotiable black-and-white decisions. Although change often is viewed as a choice between opposing forces,

The healthcare landscape is changing, and an increased emphasis is being placed on high-quality, fiscally responsible care. As clinicians face growing pressures to reduce costs, quality of care and consumer satisfaction will become primary benchmarks that distinguish oncology practices. Oncology nurses stand on the threshold of a tremendous professional opportunity for demonstrating how nursing care contributes to improved outcomes. By applying the proper skills, nurses will be able to extend their sphere of influence—continuing to provide high-quality patient care while providing increased input into overall clinical decisions and practices. To undergo this transformation, nurses need to perfect their ability to evaluate clinical data and consistently use the best available evidence to guide clinical decisions and recommendations.

Evidence-based nursing practice means that clinical decisions made by the nursing staff are based on the best available evidence. Ideally, this is from the findings of multiple, well-designed research studies. Transitioning to an evidence-based practice requires a different perspective from the traditional role of nurse as “doer” of treatments and procedures based on institutional policy or personal preference. Rather, the nurse practices as a “knowledge worker” from an updated and ever-changing knowledge base, contributing to the oncology healthcare team as a knowledgeable clinical colleague. Evidence-based practice takes more effort because current practices must be reviewed regularly and updated. Critical thinking and other important skills needed to evaluate and then

Kathi H. Mooney, RN, PhD, FAAN, AOCN®, is a professor in the College of Nursing at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. (Submitted May 2000. Accepted for publication December 10, 2000.)