The Oncology Phone: An Innovative Program for the Management of the Oncology Population in an Academic Medical Center

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Demands for oncology nursing care are increasing in the inpatient setting when patients with cancer are not located on a dedicated oncology nursing unit. As the incidence and prevalence of cancer continues to increase, oncology nurses will be confronted with how to best deliver high-quality care to this expanding population. With the growth of the oncology population and expansion of treatment options, staff are challenged to meet the care needs of an increasingly large and highly complex group of inpatients on the oncology service. Nurses are commonly faced with challenges when patients with cancer are treated in units that do not specialize in cancer care. In the off-unit locations, patients with cancer have specialized needs that range from cancer symptom management to the administration of complex, multi-drug treatment regimens typically unfamiliar to the staff on these units.

In addition to the expansion of patient care, antineoplastic agents are more commonly being prescribed for nononcologic indications. Oncology nurses are responsible for the delivery of these drugs because they are the nurses who are chemotherapy certified. Because of the expanded use of these agents, an immediate need exists for innovative strategies for management of complex oncologic diagnoses and treatments, as well as nononcologic indications requiring chemotherapy certification. From strategies developed, collecting and analyzing data surrounding the work of the innovation are important. This will assist in driving nursing practice and will inform nursing leaders of adjustments that should be made to current practice.