

# Nursing Application of Oral Chemotherapy Safety Standards: An Informal Survey

Kristine B. LeFebvre, MSN, RN, AOCN®, and Toni L. Felice, PhD

As the use of oral chemotherapy continues to rise, new approaches are needed to ensure patient safety. To help address this issue, the American Society of Clinical Oncology/Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Chemotherapy Administration Safety Standards were expanded in 2013 to include additional measures addressing oral anticancer drugs (OACs). Because minimal data assessing the application of these standards exist, ONS conducted an independent survey of oncology nurses to evaluate the application of these standards in practice as they relate to several areas of OAC use: assessment, consent, patient education, drug verification, and monitoring. The data revealed that, although the standards are followed in many settings, a large number of settings do not have processes in place to support safety standards and ensure patient safety when administering OACs. Information gained in this informal survey can be used to guide additional research and educational initiatives.

## At a Glance

- The American Society of Clinical Oncology/Oncology Nursing Society Chemotherapy Administration Safety Standards provide a structure for oral chemotherapy safety in practice.
- Interprofessional team collaboration is essential in establishing safe procedures in oral anticancer therapy ordering and administration.
- Initial survey data reflect inconsistent application of safety standards in practice.

Kristine B. LeFebvre, MSN, RN, AOCN®, is an oncology clinical specialist and Toni L. Felice, PhD, is the director of grants, both at the Oncology Nursing Society in Pittsburgh, PA. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the article. The authors did not receive honoraria for this work. No financial relationships relevant to the content of this article have been disclosed by the authors or editorial staff. The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Oncology Nursing Society. LeFebvre can be reached at [klefebvre@ons.org](mailto:klefebvre@ons.org), with copy to editor at [CJONEditor@ons.org](mailto:CJONEditor@ons.org).

Key words: oral anticancer therapy; oral chemotherapy; chemotherapy safety; chemotherapy standards; oncology nursing; chemotherapy

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/16.CJON.258-262

The transition of chemotherapy administration from the healthcare environment to the home has reduced healthcare workers' ability to ensure that drugs are being administered safely and correctly. The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)/Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Chemotherapy Administration Safety Standards (Neuss et al., 2013) were developed to provide a

structure of safety for patients receiving chemotherapy and biotherapy and detail precautions to be followed throughout the administration process. Many institutions have embraced these safety measures and have incorporated them into their quality and safety programs and policies and procedures.

The ASCO/ONS Chemotherapy Administration Safety Standards originally

were published in 2009. The version published in 2013 expanded the standards to address safety issues faced with the administration of oral anticancer therapies (OACs). The literature includes several case reports of applying the ASCO/ONS standards in practice (Enright et al., 2015; Leifeste, 2014; Vioral & Kennihan, 2012) and surveys and articles regarding safe administration of OACs (Roop & Wu, 2014; Rudnitzki & McMahon, 2015). Krzyzanowska and Powis (2015) summarized the challenges faced in measuring the safety of oral chemotherapy in comparison to that of parenteral chemotherapy and cited a need for improvements in the delivery of OACs.

Little is known about the application of the standards to the administration of OACs in general practice. The ASCO Quality Oncology Practice Initiative (QOPI®) program conducts evaluations of outpatient hematology-oncology practices using national standards (Gilmore, Schulmeister, & Jacobson, 2013; Zerillo et al., 2015) but does not focus specifically on OACs. The purpose of this initial survey was to learn more about application of the standards in relation to OACs across a variety of practice settings and to identify gaps, leading to potential areas for educational initiatives and additional research.

## Methods

In November 2014, ONS staff members developed a 23-question survey regarding the application of the standards in relation to the administration of OACs. For many questions, more than one answer was permitted. The survey was constructed using the Zarca Interactive®