



Oncology Nursing Certification (August 2015)

CANO/ACIO Position

- Specialty certification of Registered Nurses (RNs) demonstrates excellence in oncology knowledge and practice to the public, patients/families and employers.
- RNs working primarily with cancer patients or in cancer systems achieve oncology certification by their 5th year of practice.
- Organizations providing oncology services strive to have at least 75% of their eligible RNs certified in oncology.

Rationale

Oncology certification demonstrates positive outcomes for patients/families, nurses, and organizations. Nurses have indicated that the specialty certification process has a positive impact on them, both professionally and personally (Cary, 2001; Niebuhr & Biel, 2007). Certified oncology nurses from the United States have scored higher on their knowledge of managing certain oncology specific symptoms, as well as, achieved higher patient satisfaction and job satisfaction (Coleman, Coon, Lockhart, Kennedy, Montgomery, Copeland et al., 2009).

Improvements to patient outcomes, including mortality, are an advantage when receiving care from certified oncology RNs (Miller & Boyle, 2008; Kendall-Gallagher et al., 2011). Positive professional results of oncology certification which enables collaboration with the interprofessional team are: greater confidence and empowerment in their roles, and greater curiosity for future learning team (Rashleigh, Cordon, & Wong, 2011; Wade, 2009).

Organizations which support RNs with Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) certification reflect an appreciation of specialized knowledge and a commitment to life-long learning. They are recognized as having a learning culture, and are an employer of choice. These organizations also demonstrated their commitment to quality care outcomes for individuals and their families living with cancer. Magnet hospitals seek to recruit certified nurses and track the percentage of certified nurses within their organizations (Niebuhr and Biel, 2007).

Cancer Care Ontario (CCO) developed standards for RNs in systemic therapy which includes achieving national certification within five years of their employment in the



cancer program (Vandenberg, Trudeau, Coakley, Nayler, DeGrasse, Green et al., 2007).

The oncology nursing credential provided by the CNA is as follows: Certified in Oncology Nursing (Canada) (CON(C)). CNA also provides certification in Hospice/Palliative Care (CHPCN(C)). Depending on the RNs practice setting and role, it may be appropriate to have more than one certification.

CANO/ACIO acknowledges specialty certifications obtained in other countries such as, the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC) in the United States which administers certification examinations for the Oncology Certified Nurse (OCN®), Certified Pediatric Hematology (CPHON®), Certified Breast Care Nurse (CBCN®) Certified Pediatric Oncology Nurse (CPON®) and Blood and Marrow Transplant Certified Nurse (BMTCN™) (2012).

CANO/ACIO provides educational and professional development support for RNs working towards achieving and maintaining their oncology certification (e.g., podcasts, webinars, seminars, annual conferences, and standards for guiding oncology practice). Organizations and leadership have an obligation to pursue avenues of support for nurses to achieve certification whether that is in time, space, mentorship, and/or money.

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