

**CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF NURSES IN ONCOLOGY/  
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES INFIRMIERES EN ONCOLOGIE  
(CANO/ACIO)**



**Practice Standards and  
Competencies for the Specialized  
Oncology Nurse**

**Funded by:**





## **Practice Standards and Competencies for the Specialized Oncology Nurse**

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## **Introduction to Practice Standards and Competencies for the Specialized Oncology Nurse**

The Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology (CANO/ACIO) is the national professional association for oncology nurses. In 2001, CANO/ACIO distributed the CANO/ACIO Standards of Care, Roles in Oncology Nursing and Role Competencies to its members and various cancer related institutions and agencies. That foundation document identified nine standards of care to which Canadian cancer patients and their families are entitled.

The foundation document also outlined the roles of oncology nurses. The generalist nurse may care for cancer patients within an assigned caseload and is prepared at the basic educational level. The specialized nurse is a registered nurse whose primary focus is cancer care. This nurse has enhanced specialty knowledge and skill, and practices in an environment where the majority of individuals have a diagnosis of cancer or are at risk of developing cancer. The advanced oncology nurse is a master's prepared nurse with knowledge and expertise in an area of cancer nursing. All nurses move along a trajectory from novice to expert, as described by Benner (1984). It is recognized that, irrespective of whether a Generalist, Specialized Oncology or Advanced Oncology Nurse, each individual nurse will experience this trajectory from novice to expert. The degree of expertise will be influenced by the nurse's ongoing learning and day-to-day practice experiences. (Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology/Association Canadienne des Infirmières en Oncologie (CANO/ACIO) (2001): Standards of Care, Roles in Oncology Nursing, Role Competencies. Toronto, p. 28)

This document contains only those standards of oncology nursing practice for the **specialized oncology nurse**. Using the nine standards of care and the core role competencies identified in the foundation document, seven domains of practice were established: comprehensive health assessment, supportive and therapeutic relationships, management of cancer symptoms and treatment side effects, teaching and coaching, facilitating continuity of care/navigating the system, decision making and advocacy, and professional practice and leadership. For each of these domains, the practice standard is identified along with nursing competencies for achieving the practice standard. The Canadian Nurses Association Oncology Nursing Certification Exam Prep Guide was used as a guide for the development of the competencies under the domain of 'management of cancer symptoms and treatment side effects'. (Canadian Nurses Association, Oncology Nursing Certification Exam Prep Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2001). This document articulates the CANO/ACIO Standards of Care, Roles in Oncology Nursing and Role Competencies of the **specialized oncology nurse** in a format that will facilitate the implementation of these in organizations for the adult and paediatric oncology populations.

This document has been developed with the expectation that the nurse is currently meeting ethics and standards of practice as identified in his/her provincial professional association.

The standards identified in this document are the foundation of the specialized oncology nurse's practice. The scope, depth of knowledge and skill of the specialized oncology nurse should pertain to the particular patient populations the nurse is caring for, not to all populations of oncology patients.

This booklet contains the practice standards and competencies as well as a self assessment tool so that the nurse is able to evaluate his/her practice. It is hoped the assessment tool will assist the nurse to evaluate and advance knowledge and skill as they pertain to his/her practice.

It is also intended that these identified practice standards and competencies will support managers and educators in evaluating the individual nurse's competencies. It is hoped too, that these standards will help in obtaining and maintaining the structures, processes and educational programs needed to assist the nurse continue to meet these standards of excellence.

The standards of care identified in this document apply to the individual with cancer and their family.

CONEP (CANO Oncology Nursing Education Project) Working Group Summer 2005

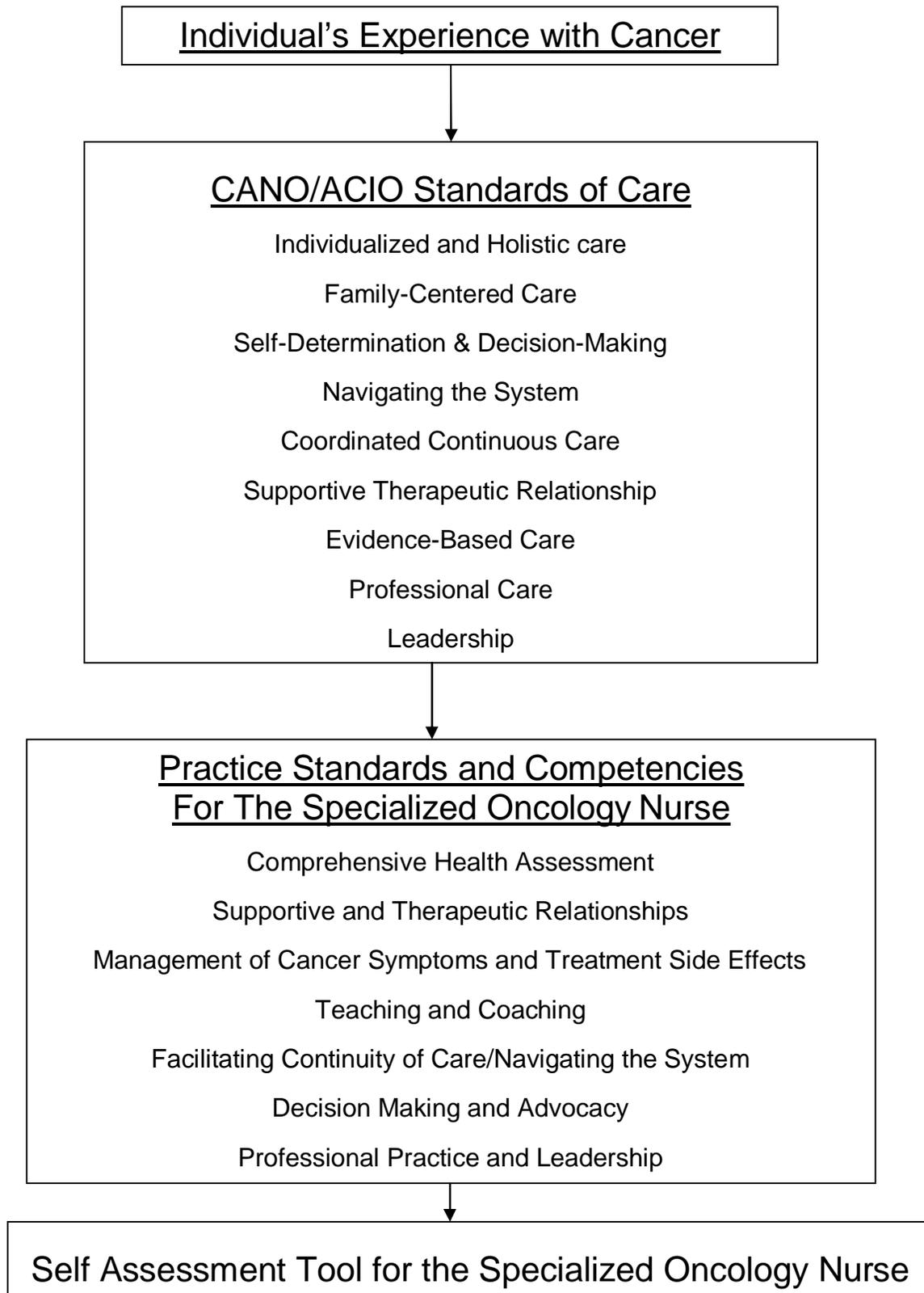
Nicole Allard, Québec; Lisa Bitonti, Ontario; Miriam Corne, Manitoba; Barbara Fitzgerald, Ontario; Janet Gammon, Ontario; Debbie Gravelle, Ontario; Joan Hamilton, Nova Scotia; Doris Howell, Ontario, chair; Monique Levesque King, New Brunswick; Shari Moura, Ontario; Linda Robb-Blenderman, Ontario; Jennifer Wiernikowski, Ontario; Marilyn Will, Alberta

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Development Process: Linking the Individual's Experience with Cancer to Nursing Practice Standards and Competencies



# CANO/ACIO Standards of Care

## **Individualized and Holistic care**

Individuals with cancer and their families are entitled to care that is individualized, holistic, and recognizes, developmental, physical, cultural, spiritual, social, economic, philosophical, political, or gender differences.

## **Family-Centered Care**

Individuals with cancer and their families are entitled to care that is family centered, incorporates growth and the developmental needs of each member, and is respectful of the families' resources and coping style.

## **Self-Determination & Decision-Making**

Individuals with cancer and their families have the right to self-determination, the right to access information, the right to make decisions about their health care, and the right to have an advocate, if they are unable or choose not to participate in decision-making.

## **Navigating the System**

Individuals with cancer and their families are entitled to care that is respectful of and responsive to their community of living. Community of living includes home, work, school, circle of friends and family and community in which the individual lives. The individual with cancer and family are entitled to assistance in navigating through the cancer and health care systems. Navigation assistance is provided throughout the entire continuum of cancer care.

## **Coordinated Continuous Care**

Individuals with cancer and their families are entitled to care that is coordinated among providers and across the continuum of cancer control (prevention, screening, early detection, pre-diagnosis, diagnosis, treatment, survivorship and palliation).

## **Supportive Therapeutic Relationship**

Individuals with cancer and their families are entitled to a supportive, knowledgeable, caring and therapeutic relationship with care providers throughout their cancer experience.

## **Evidence-Based Care**

Individuals with cancer and their families are entitled to care that is based on theory, science (physiologic and psychosocial sciences), and incorporates principles of evidence-based practice, best practice or available evidence.

## **Professional Care**

Individuals with cancer and their families are entitled to care that is professional and incorporates ethical principles and legislative requirements.

## **Leadership**

Individuals with cancer and their families are entitled to care within a system that has patient-focused, professional leadership.

# Practice Standards for the Specialized Oncology Nurse

## **Comprehensive Health Assessment**

### Practice Standard

The specialized oncology nurse conducts timely and comprehensive assessments of the health and supportive care needs of the individual with cancer and their families across the cancer continuum using a systematic approach that is sensitive to language and culture. The specialized oncology nurse considers the situational context and the needs and responses of the individual and family in determining the scope and depth of assessment.

## **Supportive and Therapeutic Relationships**

### Practice Standard

The specialized oncology nurse engages in caring and therapeutic relationships with individuals with cancer and their families. These relationships are supportive and sensitive to changing physical and psychosocial-spiritual responses.

## **Management of Cancer Symptoms and Treatment Side Effects**

### Practice Standard

The specialized oncology nurse integrates and applies knowledge of cancer pathophysiology, disease progression, treatment modalities, treatment side-effects and complications, and symptom problems to assess, plan, implement and evaluate the outcomes of best practice/evidence-based care and other clinical interventions.

## **Teaching and Coaching**

### Practice Standard

The specialized oncology nurse prepares individuals with cancer and their families for the many different aspects of the cancer experience providing education, psychosocial-spiritual support and counseling across the continuum.

## **Facilitating Continuity of Care/Navigating The System**

### Practice Standard

The specialized oncology nurse promotes and facilitates continuity of care across care settings and between health care providers by sharing information on the individual/family's current situation, plan of care and goals. The specialized oncology nurse assists the individual/family to navigate the health care system through understanding its structure, system and process and providing them with strategies to work within that system.

## **Decision Making and Advocacy**

### Practice Standard

The specialized oncology nurse, in collaboration with other members of the interprofessional health care team, facilitates self-determination and informed decision making for the individual/family. The specialized oncology nurse advocates on behalf of the individual/family, communicating and documenting their preferred approach to care.

## **Professional Practice and Leadership**

### Practice Standard

The specialized oncology nurse engages in critical thinking, integrates best practice/evidence-based knowledge, exercises ethical judgement and advocates for changes when institutional policies fail to meet the needs of oncology patients.

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**PRACTICE STANDARDS AND COMPETENCIES  
FOR  
THE SPECIALIZED ONCOLOGY NURSE**

# Practice Domain 1: Comprehensive Health Assessment

## Practice Standard

The specialized oncology nurse conducts timely and comprehensive assessments of the health and supportive care needs of the individual with cancer and their families across the cancer continuum using a systematic approach that is sensitive to language and culture. The specialized oncology nurse considers the situational context and the needs and responses of the individual and family in determining the scope and depth of assessment.

## Competencies

A specialized oncology nurse demonstrates the standard by:

- Performing and documenting a comprehensive initial physical assessment and health history (e.g. life style choices), focusing on known symptoms and complications for that particular patient population.
- Using an assessment tool/framework to collect relevant data on an ongoing basis and conducting the assessment in a systematic manner that is sensitive to the needs of the individual/family, the context of the situation and growth and development theory.
- Identifying co-morbid conditions and assessing how they may impact on the cancer disease process and the individual/family response to illness.
- Collecting and considering relevant clinical data from a variety of sources (vital signs, laboratory profiles, medication profiles, diagnostic imaging tests) to obtain a comprehensive picture of the individual's physical response to the cancer experience.
- Regularly assessing and monitoring for potential acute and chronic physical changes to the individual's response to illness using focused assessment tools (i.e. pain flow sheet, fatigue scales).
- Assessing the patient's use of and response to complementary and alternative health care (CAHC) practices throughout the cancer trajectory.

### ***Symptom Assessment***

- Conducting in-depth assessments to assess the individual for the presence of common cancer-related pain and other symptom experiences on a regular and on-going basis using a validated assessment tool and exploring the individual's symptom experience.
- Critically analyzing data obtained from ongoing symptom assessments to plan, implement, and evaluate nursing interventions during urgent and emergent illness episodes.

### ***Psychosocial, Spiritual and Cultural Assessment***

- Conducting a systematic, comprehensive psychosocial, spiritual and cultural assessment that includes the individual/family's response to cancer, their main concerns, feelings, fears, goals and understanding of prognosis.
- Assessing the individual/family's supportive and informational needs and their preferred role in decision making.
- Assessing the individual/family's pre-existing mental health needs including therapies and outcomes (if relevant).
- Assessing the individual/family's financial, social and practical concerns that may impact their cancer experience.

- Screening for psychosocial and spiritual distress using validated tools.
- Exploring and documenting the impact and meaning of illness on the individual/family and their support systems, taking into consideration their present life circumstances and their view of quality of life.
- Assessing and respecting the individual/family's religious and spiritual practices/resources that they find helpful in times of crises.
- Assessing and respecting cultural influences as they relate to the illness experience, treatment, family coping mechanisms and communication.

### **Sexual Health**

- Assessing the individual/partner's understanding of possible/probable changes in fertility and the need for birth control during treatment and recovery.
- Assessing the individual/partner's comfort and willingness to discuss the impact of sexual health changes.
- Assessing sexual health changes as a result of symptoms, disease, and treatment and their impact on the individual and partner.
- Assessing changes in body image, personal relationships, intimacy, and self-esteem and their impact on the individual and partner.
- Assessing emotional responses to changes in sexual health and their impact on the individual and partner.

## **Practice Domain 2: Supportive and Therapeutic Relationships**

### **Practice Standard**

**The specialized oncology nurse engages in caring and therapeutic relationships with individuals with cancer and their families. These relationships are supportive and sensitive to changing physical and psychosocial-spiritual responses.**

### **Competencies**

A specialized oncology nurse demonstrates the standard by:

- Understanding the cancer experience and the different needs, feelings, fears, concerns and losses that the individual/family may encounter as part of the cancer journey and being able to discuss them comfortably with the individual/family.
- Utilizing communication skills that include clarification, reflection, exploration, summarizing and open ended questions to facilitate the individual/family's disclosure of their concerns, feelings and the meaning of the illness experience.
- Actively listening to the individual/family, discuss his/her concerns and understanding that at times, supportive presence alone may be the most appropriate intervention.
- Engaging in conversations with the individual/family that explore individual fears and concerns related to living with cancer (may include disease progression, mortality, dying, sexual health issues).
- Succinctly documenting the individual/family's perspective, reactions and responses, maintaining confidentiality, but sharing what the inter-professional health care team needs to be aware of to provide individualized care.
- Applying knowledge of family dynamics and disease adaptation to support the individual/family's adjustment to managing and living with the uncertainties of cancer as a chronic illness.
- Applying supportive care strategies and best practice/evidence-based psychosocial care interventions that are within the scope of practice to facilitate effective coping.
- Being aware of and observing the boundaries that sustain a helping therapeutic relationship.
- Assisting the individual/family to maintain/establish relationships with individuals or groups who have significant meaning to them over time.
- Understanding the individual/family's responses to changes in their cancer experience and intervening appropriately
- Seeing the individual/family independent of their disease and supporting them as their lives are impacted by the illness.
- Using critical thinking skills, assessments and best- /evidence-based knowledge to anticipate, plan, implement and evaluate nursing interventions aimed at restoring optimum health in all its dimensions during the cancer experience.
- Communicating and discussing the individual/family's situation with the inter-professional health care team and facilitating their understanding of the individual/family's perspective, current experience, their cultural and spiritual beliefs, and the impacts on the response to treatment.
- Identifying individuals/families that require supportive, psychosocial and spiritual care (i.e. depression) and refer in a timely manner.

## **Practice Domain 3: Management of Cancer Symptoms and Treatment Side Effects**

### **Practice Standard**

The specialized oncology nurse integrates and applies knowledge of cancer pathophysiology, disease progression, treatment modalities, treatment side-effects and complications, and symptom problems to assess, plan, implement and evaluate the outcomes of best practice/evidence-based care and other clinical interventions.

### **Competencies**

A specialized oncology nurse demonstrates the standard by:

- Understanding the disease process, disease progression, prognosis, clinical presentation (signs and symptoms), risk factors, and standard treatments in relation to the management of the following prevalent cancer diseases in adults:
    1. Breast
    2. Prostate
    3. Lung
    4. Colorectal
  - Understanding the disease process, disease progression, prognosis, clinical presentation (signs and symptoms), risk factors, and standard treatments in relation to the management of the following less prevalent cancer diseases in adults:
    1. Bone and soft tissue sarcoma
    2. Brain and central nervous system
    3. Endocrine
    4. Gastrointestinal (Upper gastrointestinal)
    5. Genito-urinary
    6. Gynaecological
    7. Head and neck
    8. HIV-related
    9. Leukemias and Lymphomas
    10. Myelomas
    11. Skin
- Understanding the disease process, disease progression prognosis, clinical presentation (signs and symptoms), risk factors, and standard treatments in relation to the management of the following major cancer diseases in children:
    1. Bone and tissue sarcomas
    2. Brain and central nervous system
    3. Leukemias and lymphomas

#### ***Treatment Modalities***

##### **Surgery for diagnosis/treatment**

- Demonstrating an understanding of the role surgery plays in the many aspects of cancer diagnosis and treatment.
- Educating individuals and families about the outcomes and side effects of surgery.
- Anticipating, planning, implementing and evaluating best practice/evidence-based care interventions on an ongoing basis to decrease the severity of side-effects and short and long term complications of surgery.

##### **Chemotherapy**

- Demonstrating an understanding of the classifications, mechanism of action, indications for, and side effects of chemotherapeutic agents.
- Demonstrating an understanding of and following standards/guidelines related to the principles of safe handling and administration of chemotherapy.

- Educating individuals and families about the immediate, early, late and delayed side-effects of chemotherapy.
- Anticipating, planning, implementing and evaluating best practice/evidence-based nursing interventions on an ongoing basis to decrease the severity of side-effects and short and long term complications of chemotherapy.

#### Radiation Therapy

- Demonstrating an understanding of the mechanism of action, principles and purpose of the various types of radiation therapy.
- Demonstrating an understanding of and following standards related to the principles of radiation protection precautions and safe handling/disposal of radioactive sources.
- Educating individuals and families about the immediate, early, late and delayed side-effects of radiation therapy.
- Anticipating, planning, implementing and evaluating best practice/evidence-based nursing interventions on an ongoing basis to decrease the severity of side-effects and short and long term complications of radiation therapy such as radiation skin reactions.

#### Biotherapy/Hormones

- Demonstrating an understanding of the principles, indications, classification, and mechanism of action of biotherapy/hormones.
- Demonstrating an understanding of and following standards/guidelines related to the principles of safe handling and administration of biotherapies/hormones.
- Educating individuals and families about the immediate, early, late and delayed side-effects of biotherapy/hormones.
- Anticipating, planning, implementing and evaluating best practice/evidence-based nursing interventions on an ongoing basis to decrease the severity of side-effects and short and long term complications of biotherapy/hormones.

#### Haematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant

- Demonstrating an understanding of the principles and indications for haematopoietic stem cell transplants.
- Demonstrating an understanding of and following standards related to the principles of safe handling/disposal and infusion of haematopoietic stem cell transplant.
- Educating individuals and families about the immediate, early, late and delayed side-effects of haematopoietic stem cell transplants.
- Anticipating, planning, implementing and evaluating best practice/evidence-based nursing interventions on an ongoing basis to decrease the severity of side-effects and short and long term complications of haematopoietic stem cell transplants.

#### Other therapies

- Understanding the potential role of complementary and alternative health care practices in supporting patients and families throughout the cancer trajectory (i.e. visualization, relaxation, acupuncture, massage, therapeutic touch, heat/cold).
- Understanding that complementary and alternative health care practices may interact in a negative manner with conventional cancer treatment (i.e. chemotherapy) or cause unpleasant and /or harmful side effects.

#### Combined Modalities

- Demonstrating an understanding of the effects of combined therapies on the severity of/synergy of side effects and complications.

#### Palliative Therapies

- Understanding the use of all these treatment modalities in the palliation of patients with advanced disease.

### ***Symptom and Side Effects Management***

- Applying knowledge of cancer type and trajectory, etiology of symptoms, and treatment complications to anticipate treatment side-effects and symptoms using best practice/evidence-based interventions to prevent or minimize problems/symptoms as they occur.
- Anticipating, planning, implementing and utilizing best practice/evidence-based approaches to intervene effectively in treatment side-effect and symptom management and evaluating the effect of these interventions on an ongoing basis.
- Utilizing non-pharmacological approaches that are evidence based, in the management of treatment side-effects and cancer symptoms.
- Utilizing principles of effective teaching to ensure individuals/families understand treatment side-effects and symptoms and how these will be managed.
- Addressing common concerns such as fears of addiction and tolerance.

### ***Oncologic Emergencies***

- Understanding the disease process, disease progression, prognosis, clinical presentation (signs and symptoms), risk factors, and standard treatments in relation to the management of the following oncologic emergencies:
  1. Spinal cord compression
  2. Superior vena cava syndrome
  3. Syndrome of inappropriate antidiuretic hormone secretion (SIADH)
  4. Disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC)
  5. Neoplastic cardiac tamponade
  6. Tumour lysis syndrome
  7. Hypercalcaemia
  8. Malignant bowel obstruction
  9. Sepsis/Febrile neutropenia

### ***Sexual Health Issues***

- Sensitively preparing the individual/partner for potential/probable fertility changes and the need to maintain birth control measures.
- Preparing the individual/partner for the possible/probable sexual functioning/performance changes and other symptoms and side effects that can be experienced as a result of the disease and treatment.
- Preparing the individual/partner for possible changes to body image and self-esteem.
- Discussing the changes, stresses and challenges that couples may experience in their relationship as a result of the cancer diagnosis and sexual health changes.
- Providing suggestions to address the sexual health changes that the individual/partner has identified as a concern.
- Consulting professionals with expertise to help the individual/partner address sexual functioning changes, other symptoms related to sexual health changes, body image issues, self-esteem issues and relationship issues.

### ***Safe Use of Treatment Delivery Devices (Technology)***

- Understanding the safety issues associated with technical devices used in cancer treatment such as central venous access devices, syringe drivers, ambulatory pain pumps etc.
- Assessing and anticipating problems/issues associated with these devices and educating the individual/family about self care related to these devices.
- Safely managing the care of the individual/family with these devices as per existing organizational standards.

## **Practice Domain 4: Teaching and Coaching**

### **Practice Standard**

**The specialized oncology nurse prepares individuals with cancer and their families for the many different aspects of the cancer experience providing education, psychosocial-spiritual support and counseling across the continuum.**

### **Competencies**

A specialized oncology nurse demonstrates the standard by:

- Assessing the individual/family's readiness to learn, their learning styles, and preferred depth of information to develop a relevant teaching plan.
  - Applying the principles of adult, child, and family learning when planning, implementing and evaluating best practice/evidence based nursing interventions to educate and coach individuals and families about the cancer experience.
  - adjusting teaching and coaching to address factors such as life stage, culture, education and family decision-making and communication styles that impact on learning.
  - Assessing the individual's understanding of common psychological reactions and responses to the cancer experience and providing information about effective coping mechanisms.
  - Identifying limitations in the nurses' own skill and knowledge base and referring to others when appropriate.
  - Assisting the individual/family to identify and build on their existing strengths when confronting new information and situations.
  - Assisting the individual/family to understand the importance of adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors to optimize treatment outcomes.
  - Assisting the individual/family to understand the risks and benefits of cancer treatment options, including clinical research trials and complementary and alternative health care practices, taking into consideration their own values and beliefs.
- Facilitating the individual/family's understanding of the episodic and chronic nature of cancer.
  - Facilitating the development of self-care in order to manage and anticipate the signs and symptoms of disease, side effects of treatments, and symptom identification.
  - Providing relevant information/education at the appropriate times through the cancer experience related to:
    1. Prevention and screening
    2. Disease process and progression and prognosis
    3. Possible treatment options
    4. Plan and goal of care
    5. Treatments - purpose, side effects, scheduling, treatment administration, management of side effects
    6. Pain and symptom relief
    7. Physical care through treatment and recovery
    8. Psychosocial, spiritual care
    9. Medication administration
    10. Oncologic emergencies and other possible complications
    11. Resources and services (agency and community)
    12. Recovery, rehabilitation and survivorship
    13. Palliative Care and end of life care
    14. Bereavement

- Understanding genetic risk factors and assisting the individual/family to access information relevant to their disease and supporting them through their experience.
- Applying knowledge of the role of genetics in disease-associated variations to assess genetic family history information and providing information to families on the role of genetics in prevention, diagnosis and treatment options.
- Assisting the individual and family in understanding the processes of genetic counseling and referring them to appropriate genetic information resources and genetic professionals.

## **Practice Domain 5: Facilitating Continuity of Care/Navigating The System**

### **Practice Standard**

**The specialized oncology nurse promotes and facilitates continuity of care across care settings and between health care providers by sharing information on the individual/family's current situation, plan of care and goals. The specialized oncology nurse assists the individual/family to navigate the health care system through understanding its structure, system and process and providing them with strategies to work within that system.**

### **Competencies**

A specialized oncology nurse demonstrates the standard by:

- Applying knowledge to assist the individual/family to navigate the health care system, anticipating gaps and problems they may encounter, and guiding them in approaches to facilitate access to care.
- Facilitating the coordination of care through collaboration with the interprofessional team regarding individual/family goals, needs, plan of care, main concerns and expectations.
- Applying knowledge of the individual/family's changing needs as they move across the cancer care continuum, supporting them through the transitions.
- Initiating, advocating and mobilizing agency and community resources required by the individual/family, to facilitate needs being met at different points of time and care settings.
- Collaborating with the individual/family to assess and anticipate their needs for resources and supporting their goals of care.
- Applying knowledge of the impact of cancer on the individual/family roles and relationships, facilitating role redefinition and adaptation.
- Clarifying and validating the individual/family's expectations of the health care system.
- Preparing the individual/family to understand the process of cancer care delivery and anticipating concerns about treatment delays and acceptable standards for wait times for cancer care delivery.
- Instructing the individual/family about the appropriate person to contact for concerns and problems as they arise along the cancer trajectory.
- Helping the individual/family to understand the concept of palliative care and end of life care as the need arises along the trajectory and facilitating access to palliative care experts as needed.
- Advising the individual/family concerning survivorship issues specific to developmental stage and the resources available to support them.

## **Practice Domain 6: Decision Making and Advocacy**

### **Practice Standard**

**The specialized oncology nurse, in collaboration with other members of the interprofessional health care team, facilitates self-determination and informed decision making for the individual/family. The specialized oncology nurse advocates on behalf of the individual/family, communicating and documenting their preferred approach to care.**

### **Competencies**

A specialized oncology nurse demonstrates the standard by:

- Clarifying with the individual that they understand the implications and outcomes of care and treatment before providing/ administering it to them.
- Applying a non-judgemental approach to facilitating an individual's decision making
- Referring the individual/family to an appropriate expert when necessary.
- Advocating for the individual/family's wishes and decisions when developing the interprofessional plan of care.
- Helping the individual/family to identify and review goals, issues and concerns related to decision making.
- Integrating and applying knowledge of the influence of culture, developmental stage, age, gender influences, family dynamics and the determinants of health in decision making.
- Using negotiation and collaborative skills to advocate for the individual.
- Assessing, on an ongoing basis, the individual/family's preferred role in decision making along the continuum.
- Helping the individual/family understand the various cancer treatment options available and the implications of the treatment decisions/choices that are made including those related to informed consent in clinical trial participation.
- Mediating when the individual and the individual's family differ regarding self-determination arise.
- Documenting the individual's goals and preferences for decision making and the processes used to arrive at these decisions.

## **Practice Domain 7: Professional Practice and Leadership**

### **Practice Standard**

**The specialized oncology nurse engages in critical thinking, integrates best practice/evidence-based knowledge, exercises ethical judgement and advocates for changes when institutional policies fail to meet the needs of oncology patients.**

### **Competencies**

A specialized oncology nurse demonstrates the standard by:

- Using research and best practice/evidence-based knowledge in assessing, planning, providing and evaluating care.
- Reflecting on her/his practice to examine thoughts, feelings, actions, beliefs, assumptions and knowledge in providing care and using this to improve practice.
- Regularly participating in various educational activities to expanding his/her oncology nursing specialty knowledge and skill (ex. completion of CON(C) certification exam, credited courses, consulting with colleagues and other experts in the field, attending relevant workshops/seminars/in-services and reading relevant articles/evidence).
- Acting as a mentor and a resource person to fellow nursing colleagues and students in the specialty of oncology nursing.
- Supporting, initiating or participating in research activities based on individual expertise and stage of clinical/professional practice i.e. research utilization in her/his practice, reading research articles, recruiting patients for clinical trials, participating as an active research team member, identifying researchable problems, initiating a research study.
- Critically analyzing cancer care situations to identify potential ethical issues, applying an ethical framework to support individual/family decision making processes and accessing resources to assist as required.
- Integrating and applying knowledge about continuous quality improvement and program evaluation to improve the quality of cancer patient care and patient satisfaction, taking into consideration care cost and resource allocation issues.
- Identifying potential or actual gaps in cancer care and working creatively with the interprofessional health care team to resolve them.
- Applying leadership skills in promoting practice change.
- Applying knowledge of best practice/evidence-based interventions in the planning and provision of care.
- Actively participating in interprofessional teams to ensure nursing's perspective is heard at the level of health system structures and processes.
- Actively participating in professional associations and organizations that promote cancer care and advance oncology nursing.
- Recognizing the ongoing stress of working in cancer care and the importance of maintaining therapeutic relationships, a balanced life and seeking professional help when needed.

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**PRACTICE STANDARDS AND COMPETENCIES  
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# **SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL**



## **Practice Standards and Competencies for the Specialized Oncology Nurse**

The writers have used their best efforts to provide accurate information at the time of printing. The authors and the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology hereby disclaim all responsibility for any loss suffered by any person in the light of future discoveries in this field, and for any errors or omissions in the text. The Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology cannot be held responsible for the delivery of the educational materials contained herein which may differ from the original intent.

## Practice Standards and Competencies for the Specialized Oncology Nurse: Self Assessment Tool

### Introduction

The purpose of this document is to enable the specialized oncology nurse to reflect on his/her own practice to identify personal learning needs and evaluate his/her ability to practice to the scope of the specialty of oncology.

Based on the CANO Standards of Care/Roles in Oncology/Role Competencies (2001), this tool describes the competencies expected of the specialized oncology nurse within seven (7) domains of oncology nursing practice:

1. Comprehensive Health Assessment
2. Supportive and Therapeutic Relationships
3. Management of Cancer Symptoms and Treatment Side Effects
4. Teaching and Coaching
5. Facilitating Continuity of Care/Navigating the System
6. Decision Making and Advocacy
7. Professional Practice and Leadership

The components of the tool are:

I) PRACTICE DOMAIN A focus of oncology nursing practice.						
Practice Standard  The practice standard (core competency) encompasses the knowledge, skill, judgment and application necessary to effectively practice within the domain of practice.	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not Applicable to my practice
<b>Competency</b> A competency describes the behaviors expected of the specialized oncology nurse in meeting the practice standard.						
1) I demonstrate.....						
2) I integrate and apply.....						
3) I identify .....						

The evaluation framework, adapted from Haag-Heitman & Kramer (1998), which is based on Benner's (1984) "novice to expert theory" and Dreyfus' (1986) model of skill acquisition, is used to assist you in your self-assessment:

Level	Skills and Knowledge
Novice	Marginal conceptual understanding, minimal clinical experience, very little knowledge of the topic area, textbook/classroom knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You seek assistance in making clinical decisions</li> <li>• You have minimal skills or practice in this area</li> </ul>
Advanced Beginner	Conceptual understanding, minimal clinical experience, some knowledge of the topic area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have had limited exposure to clinical situations</li> <li>• You are able to identify normal findings</li> <li>• You are guided by what you need to do rather than by patient responses</li> </ul>
Competent	Conceptual understanding and skill performance (competent), clinically experienced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have had varied exposure to many situations</li> <li>• You are able to identify normal and abnormal findings</li> <li>• You have an awareness of patient and family view points</li> <li>• You are able to manage complex situations</li> <li>• You are able to prioritize</li> </ul>
Proficient	Conceptual understanding, proficient performance, clinically experienced, able to make quick and accurate clinical judgments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have had extensive exposure in most situations</li> <li>• You are able to anticipate potential assessment changes</li> <li>• You are able to prioritize in response to changing situations</li> <li>• You are able to interpret the patient and family experience from a wider perspective</li> </ul>
Expert	Analysis, synthesis, application, highly skilled clinically, extensive and well-developed knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have had extensive exposure with deep understanding of the situation</li> <li>• You are able to rapidly and consistently identify actual and potential assessment changes</li> <li>• You are able to rapidly change priorities under all conditions</li> <li>• You are able to keep personal values in perspective and therefore able to encourage and support patient and family choices.</li> </ul>
Not Applicable to My Practice	The topic area is not relevant to your practice. In your current nursing role, you would not require this knowledge/skill.

## Directions

1. Read each statement carefully and reflect on it based on the evaluation criteria.
2. Check the appropriate level for each statement.
3. Total the number of each level at the end of each category.
4. Proceed to the end of the tool.

### Key Points to Remember While Completing The Self-Assessment

- The **Specialized Oncology Nurse** is a registered nurse whose primary focus is cancer care. This nurse has enhanced specialty knowledge and skill, and practices in an environment where the majority of individuals have a diagnosis of cancer or are at risk for developing cancer.
- The scope and depth of knowledge and skill of the specialized oncology nurse should pertain to the particular patient population that the nurse is caring for, not to all populations of oncology patients.
- It is recognized that there are system barriers such as lack of administrative support, lack of time and competing priorities that will create challenges in meeting these competencies.
- Striving for excellence in oncology nursing is the goal of these competencies.

Practice Domain 1: COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH ASSESSMENT						
Practice Standard	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
The specialized oncology nurse conducts timely and comprehensive assessments of the health and supportive care needs of the individual with cancer and their families across the cancer continuum using a systematic approach that is sensitive to language and culture. The specialized oncology nurse considers situational context and the needs and responses of the individual and family in determining the scope and depth of assessment.						
<b>Physical Assessment/Health History</b>						
1.1 I perform and document a comprehensive initial physical assessment and health history (e.g. life style choices), focusing on known symptoms and complications for that particular patient population.						
1.2 I use an assessment tool/framework to collect relevant data on an ongoing basis and conduct my assessment in a systematic manner that is sensitive to the needs of the individual/family, the context of the situation, and growth and development theory.						
1.3 I identify co-morbid conditions and assess how they may impact on the cancer disease process and the individual/family's response to illness.						
1.4 I collect and consider relevant clinical data from a variety of sources (vital signs, laboratory profiles, medication profiles, diagnostic imaging tests) to obtain a comprehensive picture of the individual's physical response to the cancer experience.						
1.5 I regularly assess and monitor for potential acute and chronic physical changes to the individual's response to illness using focused assessment tools (i.e. pain flow sheet, fatigue scales).						
1.6 I assess the patient's use of, and response to complementary and alternative health care practices (CAHC) throughout the cancer trajectory.						
<b>Symptom Assessment</b>						
1.7 I conduct in-depth systematic assessments to assess the individual for the presence of common cancer-related pain and other symptom experiences on a regular and on-going basis using a validated assessment tool and explore the individual's symptom experience.						
1.8 I critically analyze data obtained from ongoing symptom assessments to plan, implement, and evaluate nursing interventions during urgent and emergent illness episodes.						
<b>Psychosocial, Spiritual and Cultural Assessment</b>						
1.9 I conduct a systematic, comprehensive psychosocial, spiritual and cultural assessment that includes the individual/family's responses to cancer, their main concerns, feelings, fears, goals and understanding of prognosis.						

	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
1.10 I assess the individual/family's supportive and informational needs and their preferred role in decision making.						
1.11 I assess the individual/family's pre-existing mental health needs including therapies and outcomes (if relevant).						
1.12 I assess the individual/family's financial, social and practical concerns that may impact their cancer experience.						
1.13 I screen for psychosocial and spiritual distress using validated tools.						
1.14 I explore and document the impact and meaning of illness on the individual/family and their support systems, taking into consideration their present life circumstances and their view of quality of life.						
1.15 I assess and respect the individual/family's religious and spiritual practices/resources that they find helpful in times of crises.						
1.16 I assess and respect cultural influences as they relate to the illness experience, treatment, family coping mechanisms and communication.						
<b>Sexual Health</b>						
1.17 I assess the individual/ partner's understanding of possible/probable changes in fertility and the need for birth control during treatment and recovery.						
1.18 I assess the individual/partner's comfort and willingness to discuss the impact of sexual health changes.						
1.19 I assess sexual health changes as a result of symptoms, disease, and treatment and their impact on the individual and partner.						
1.20 I assess changes in body image, personal relationships, intimacy, and self-esteem and their impact on the individual and partner.						
1.21 I assess emotional responses to changes in sexual health and their impact on the individual and partner.						
<b>Subtotal</b>						

Practice Domain 2: SUPPORTIVE AND THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIPS						
Practice Standard The specialized oncology nurse engages in caring and therapeutic relationships with individuals with cancer and their families. These relationships are supportive and sensitive to changing physical and psychosocial-spiritual responses.	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
2.1 I understand the cancer experience and the different needs, feelings, fears, concerns and losses that the individual/family may encounter as part of the cancer journey and am able to discuss them comfortably with the individual/family.						
2.2 I utilize communication skills that include clarification, reflection, exploration, summarizing and open ended questions to facilitate the individual/family's disclosure of their concerns, feelings and the meaning of the illness experience.						
2.3 I actively listen to the individual/family discuss concerns and understand that at times, supportive presence alone may be the most appropriate intervention.						
2.4 I engage in conversations with the individual/family that explore their individual fears and concerns related to living with cancer (may include disease progression, mortality, dying, sexual health issues).						
2.5 I succinctly document the individual/family's perspective, reactions and responses, maintain confidentiality, but share what the interprofessional health care team needs to be aware of to provide individualized care.						
2.6 I apply knowledge of family dynamics and disease adaptation to support the individual/family's adjustment to managing and living with the uncertainties of cancer as a chronic illness.						
2.7 I apply supportive care strategies and best practice/evidence-based psychosocial care interventions that are within my scope of practice to facilitate effective coping.						
2.8 I am aware of and observe the boundaries that sustain a helping therapeutic relationship.						
2.9 I assist the individual/family to maintain/establish relationships with individuals or groups who have significant meaning to them over time.						
2.10 I understand the individual/family' responses to changes in their cancer experience and I intervene appropriately.						
2.11 I see the individual/family independent of their disease and support them as their lives are impacted by the illness.						
2.12 I use critical thinking skills, assessment and best practice/evidence-based knowledge to anticipate, plan, implement and evaluate nursing interventions aimed at restoring optimal health in all its dimensions during the cancer experience.						

	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
2.13 I communicate and discuss the individual/family's situation with the interprofessional health care team and facilitate their understanding of the individual/family's perspective, current experience, their cultural and spiritual beliefs, and the impacts on the response to treatment.						
2.14 I identify individuals/families who require supportive, psychosocial and spiritual care (i.e. depression) and refer in a timely manner.						
<b>Subtotal</b>						

Practice Domain 3: MANAGEMENT OF CANCER SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT SIDE EFFECTS						
Practice Standard The specialized oncology nurse integrates and applies knowledge of cancer pathophysiology, disease progression, treatment modalities, treatment side-effects and complications, and symptom problems to assess, plan, implement and evaluate the outcomes of best practice/evidence-based care and other clinical interventions.	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
<b>Management of Cancer Diseases</b>						
3.1 I understand the disease process, disease progression, prognosis, clinical presentation (signs and symptoms), risk factors, and standard treatments in relation to the management of the following prevalent cancer diseases in adults:						
Breast						
Prostate						
Lung						
Colorectal						
3.2 I understand the disease process, disease progression, prognosis, clinical presentation (signs and symptoms), risk factors, and standard treatments in relation to the management of the following less prevalent cancer diseases in adults:						
Bone and soft tissue sarcoma						
Brain and central nervous system						
Endocrine						
Gastrointestinal (Upper gastrointestinal)						
Genito-urinary						
Gynaecological						
Head and neck						
HIV-related						
Leukemias and Lymphomas						
Myelomas						
Skin						
3.3 I understand the disease process, disease progression prognosis, clinical presentation (signs and symptoms), risk factors, and standard treatments in relation to the management of the following major cancer diseases in children:						
Bone and tissue sarcomas						
Brain and central nervous system						
Leukemias and lymphomas						
<b>Treatment Modalities</b>						
<b>Surgery for diagnosis/treatment</b>						
3.4 I demonstrate an understanding of the role surgery plays in the many aspects of cancer diagnosis and treatment.						
3.5 I educate individuals and families about the outcomes and side effects of surgery.						

	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
3.6 I anticipate, plan, implement and evaluate best practice/evidence-based care interventions on an ongoing basis to decrease the severity of side-effects and short and long term complications of surgery.						
<b>Chemotherapy</b>						
3.7 I demonstrate an understanding of the classifications, mechanism of action, indications for, and side effects of chemotherapeutic agents.						
3.8 I demonstrate an understanding of and follow standards/guidelines related to the principles of safe handling and administration of chemotherapy.						
3.9 I educate individuals and families about the immediate, early, late and delayed side-effects of chemotherapy.						
3.10 I anticipate, plan, implement and evaluate best practice/evidence-based nursing interventions on an ongoing basis to decrease the severity of side-effects and short and long term complications of chemotherapy.						
<b>Radiation Therapy</b>						
3.11 I demonstrate an understanding of the mechanism of action, principles and purpose of the various types of radiation therapy.						
3.12 I demonstrate an understanding of and follow standards related to the principles of radiation protection precautions and safe handling/disposal of radioactive sources.						
3.13 I educate individuals and families about the immediate, early, late and delayed side-effects of radiation therapy.						
3.14 I anticipate, plan, implement and evaluate best practice/evidence-based nursing interventions on an ongoing basis to decrease the severity of side-effects and short and long term complications of radiation therapy such as radiation skin reactions.						
<b>Biotherapy/Hormones</b>						
3.15 I demonstrate an understanding of the principles, indications, classification, and mechanism of action of biotherapy/hormones.						
3.16 I demonstrate an understanding of and follow standards/guidelines related to the principles of safe handling and administration of biotherapies/hormones.						
3.17 I educate individuals and families about the immediate, early, late and delayed side-effects of biotherapy/hormones.						
3.18 I anticipate, plan, implement and evaluate best practice/evidence-based nursing interventions on an ongoing basis to decrease the severity of side-effects and short and long term complications of biotherapy/hormones.						

	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
<b>Haematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant</b>						
3.19 I demonstrate an understanding of the principles and indications for haematopoietic stem cell transplants.						
3.20 I demonstrate an understanding of and follow standards related to the principles of safe handling/disposal and infusion of haematopoietic stem cell transplant.						
3.21 I educate individuals and families about the immediate, early, late and delayed side-effects of haematopoietic stem cell transplants.						
3.22 I anticipate, plan, implement and evaluate best practice/evidence-based nursing interventions on an ongoing basis to decrease the severity of side-effects and short and long term complications of haematopoietic stem cell transplants.						
<b>Other therapies</b>						
3.23 I understand the potential role of complementary and alternative health care practices in supporting patients throughout the cancer trajectory (i.e. visualization, relaxation, acupuncture, massage, therapeutic touch, heat/cold).						
3.24 I understand that complementary and alternative health care practices may interact in a negative manner with conventional cancer treatment (i.e. chemotherapy) or cause unpleasant and/or harmful side effects.						
<b>Combined Modalities</b>						
3.25 I demonstrate an understanding of the effects of combined therapies on the severity of/synergy of side effects and complications.						
<b>Palliative Therapies</b>						
3.26 I understand the use of all these treatment modalities in the palliation of patients with advanced disease.						
<b>Symptom and Side Effects Management</b>						
3.27 I apply knowledge of cancer type and trajectory, etiology of symptoms, and treatment complications to anticipate treatment side-effects and symptoms using best practice/evidence-based interventions to prevent or minimize problems/symptoms as they occur.						
3.28 I anticipate, plan, implement and utilize best practice/evidence-based approaches to intervene effectively in treatment side-effect and symptom management and evaluate the effect of these interventions on an ongoing basis.						
3.29 I utilize non-pharmacological approaches that are evidence-based, in the management of treatment side-effects and cancer symptoms.						
3.30 I utilize principles of effective teaching to ensure individuals/families understand treatment side-effects/symptoms and how these will be managed.						

	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
3.31 I address common concerns such as fears of addiction and tolerance.						
<b><i>Oncologic Emergencies</i></b>						
3.32 I understand the disease process, disease progression, prognosis, clinical presentation (signs and symptoms), risk factors, and standard treatments in relation to the management of the following oncologic emergencies:						
Spinal cord compression						
Superior vena cava syndrome						
Syndrome of inappropriate antidiuretic hormone secretion (SIADH)						
Disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC)						
Neoplastic cardiac tamponade						
Tumour lysis syndrome						
Hypercalcaemia						
Malignant bowel obstruction						
Sepsis/Febrile neutropenia						
<b><i>Sexual Health Issues</i></b>						
3.33 I sensitively prepare the individual/partner for potential/probable fertility changes and the need to maintain birth control measures.						
3.34 I prepare the individual/partner for the possible/probable sexual functioning/performance changes and other symptoms and side effects that can be experienced as a result of the disease and treatment.						
3.35 I prepare the individual/partner for possible changes to body image and self-esteem.						
3.36 I discuss the changes, stresses and challenges that couples may experience in their relationship as a result of the cancer diagnosis and sexual health changes.						
3.37 I provide suggestions to address the sexual health changes that the individual/partner has identified as a concern.						
3.38 I consult professionals with expertise to help the individual/partner address sexual functioning changes, other symptoms related to sexual health changes, body image issues, self-esteem issues and relationship issues.						
<b><i>Safe Use of Treatment Delivery Devices (Technology)</i></b>						
3.39 I understand the safety issues associated with technical devices used in cancer treatment such as central venous access devices, syringe drivers, ambulatory pain pumps etc.						

	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
3.40 I assess and anticipate problems/issues associated with these devices and I educate the individual/family about self care related to these devices.						
3.41 I safely manage the care of the individual/family with these devices as per existing organizational standards.						
<b>Subtotal</b>						

Practice Domain 4: TEACHING AND COACHING						
Practice Standard The specialized oncology nurse prepares individuals with cancer and their families for the many different aspects of the cancer experience providing education, psychosocial-spiritual support and counseling across the continuum.	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
4.1 I assess the individual/family's readiness to learn, their learning styles, and preferred depth of information to develop a relevant teaching plan.						
4.2 I apply the principles of adult, child, and family learning when planning, implementing and evaluating best practice/evidence based nursing interventions to educate and coach individuals and families about the cancer experience.						
4.3 I adjust my teaching and coaching to address factors such as life stage, culture, education and family decision-making and communication styles that impact on learning.						
4.4 I assess the individual's understanding of common psychological reactions and responses to the cancer experience and provide information about effective coping mechanisms.						
4.5 I identify limitations in my skill and knowledge base and refer to others when appropriate.						
4.6 I assist the individual/family to identify and build on their existing strengths when confronting new information and situations.						
4.7 I assist the individual/family to understand the importance of adopting healthy lifestyle behaviours to optimize treatment outcomes.						
4.8 I assist the individual/family to understand the risks and benefits of cancer treatment options, including clinical research trials and complimentary/alternative health care practices, taking into consideration their own values and beliefs.						
4.9 I facilitate the individual/family's understanding of the episodic and chronic nature of cancer.						
4.10 I facilitate the development of self-care in order to manage and anticipate the signs and symptoms of disease, side effects of treatments, and symptom identification.						

	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
<p>4.11 I provide relevant information/education at the appropriate times through the cancer experience related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevention and screening</li> <li>Disease process and progression and prognosis</li> <li>Possible treatment options</li> <li>Plan and goal of care</li> <li>Treatments - purpose, side effects, scheduling, treatment administration, management of side effects</li> <li>Pain and symptom relief</li> <li>Physical care through treatment and recovery</li> <li>Psychosocial, spiritual care</li> <li>Medication administration</li> <li>Oncologic emergencies and other possible complications</li> <li>Resources and services (agency and community)</li> <li>Recovery, rehabilitation and survivorship</li> <li>Palliative Care and end of life care</li> <li>Bereavement</li> </ul>						
4.12 I understand genetic risk factors and assist the individual/family to access information relevant to their disease and I support them through their experience.						
4.13 I apply knowledge of the role of genetics in disease-associated variations to assess genetic family history information and to provide information to families on the role of genetics in prevention, diagnosis and treatment options.						
4.14 I assist the individual and family in understanding the processes of genetic counseling and refer them to appropriate genetic information resources and genetic professionals.						
<b>Subtotal</b>						

Practice Domain 5: FACILITATING CONTINUITY OF CARE/NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM						
Practice Standard The specialized oncology nurse promotes and facilitates continuity of care, across care settings and between health care providers by the sharing information on the individual/family's current situation, plan of care and goals. The specialized oncology nurse assists the individual/family to navigate the health care system through understanding its structure, system and process and providing them with strategies to work within that system.	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
5.1 I apply knowledge to assist the individual/family to navigate the health care system, anticipating gaps and problems they may encounter, and guide them in approaches to facilitate access to care.						
5.2 I facilitate the coordination of care through collaboration with the interprofessional team regarding individual/family goals, needs, plan of care, main concerns and expectations.						
5.3 I apply knowledge of the individual/family's changing needs as they move across the cancer care continuum, supporting them through the transitions.						
5.4 I initiate, advocate and mobilize agency and community resources required by the individual/family, to facilitate needs being met at different points of time and care settings.						
5.5 I collaborate with the individual/family to assess and anticipate their needs for resources and support their goals of care.						
5.6 I apply knowledge of the impact of cancer on the individual/family roles and relationships, facilitating role redefinition and adaptation.						
5.7 I clarify and validate the individual/family's expectations of the health care system.						
5.8 I prepare the individual/family to understand the process of cancer care delivery and I anticipate concerns about treatment delays and acceptable standards for wait times for cancer care delivery.						
5.9 I instruct the individual/family about the appropriate person to contact for concerns and problems as they arise along the cancer trajectory.						
5.10 I help the individual/family to understand the concept of palliative care and end of life care as the need arises along the trajectory and facilitate access to palliative care experts as needed.						
5.11 I advise the individual/family concerning survivorship issues specific to developmental stage and the resources available to support them.						
<b>Subtotal</b>						

Practice Domain 6: DECISION MAKING AND ADVOCACY						
Practice Standard The specialized oncology nurse, in collaboration with other members of the interprofessional health care team, facilitates self-determination and informed decision making for the individual/family. The specialized oncology nurse advocates on behalf of the individual/family, communicating and documenting their preferred approach to care.	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
6.1 I clarify with the individual that they understand the implications and outcomes of care and treatment before providing/administering it to them .						
6.2 I apply a non-judgmental approach to facilitate an individual's decision making.						
6.3 I refer the individual/family to an appropriate expert when necessary.						
6.4 I advocate for the individual/family's wishes and decisions when developing the interprofessional plan of care.						
6.5 I help the individual/family to identify and review goals, issues and concerns related to decision making.						
6.6 I integrate and apply knowledge of the influence of culture, developmental stage, age, gender influences, family dynamics and the determinants of health in decision making.						
6.7 I use negotiation and collaborative skills to advocate for the individual.						
6.8 I assess, on an ongoing basis, the individual/family's preferred role in decision making along the continuum.						
6.9 I help the individual/family understand the various cancer treatment options available and the implications of the treatment decisions/choices that are made including those related to informed consent in clinical trial participation.						
6.10 I mediate when the individual and the individual's family differ regarding self-determination.						
6.11 I document the individual's goals and preferences for decision making and the processes used to arrive at these decisions.						
<b>Subtotal</b>						

Practice Domain 7: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP						
Practice Standard The specialized oncology nurse engages in critical thinking, integrates best practice/evidence-based knowledge, exercises ethical judgment and advocates for changes when institutional policies fail to meet the needs of oncology patients.	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Not applicable To My Practice
7.1 I use research and best practice/evidence based knowledge in assessing, planning, providing and evaluating care.						
7.2 I reflect on my practice to examine my thoughts, feeling, actions, beliefs, assumption and knowledge in providing care and use this to improve my practice.						
7.3 I regularly participate in various continuing education activities to expand my oncology nursing specialty knowledge and skill (i.e. completion of CON(C) certification exam, credited courses, consulting with colleagues and other experts in the field, attending relevant workshops/seminars/in-services and reading relevant articles/evidence).						
7.4 I act as a mentor/resource person to fellow nursing colleagues and students in the specialty of oncology nursing.						
7.5 I support, initiate or participate in research activities based on my own expertise and stage of clinical/professional practice i.e. research utilization in my practice, reading research articles, recruiting patients for clinical trials, participating as an active research team member, identifying researchable problems, initiating a research study.						
7.6 I critically analyze cancer care situations to identify potential ethical issues applying an ethical framework to support individual/family decision making processes and access resources to assist as required.						
7.7 I integrate and apply knowledge about continuous quality improvement and program evaluation, to improve the quality of cancer patient care and patient satisfaction, taking into consideration care cost and resource allocation issues.						
7.8 I identify potential or actual gaps in cancer care and work to creatively with the interprofessional health care team to resolve them.						
7.9 I apply leadership skills in promoting practice change.						
7.10 I apply knowledge of best practice/evidence-based interventions in my planning and provision of care.						
7.11 I actively participate in interprofessional teams to ensure nursing's perspective is heard at the level of health system structures and processes.						
7.12 I actively participate in professional associations and organizations that promote cancer care and advance oncology nursing.						
7.14 I recognize the ongoing stress of working in cancer care and the importance of maintaining therapeutic relationships, a balanced life and seeking professional help when needed.						
<b>Subtotal</b>						

**Directions**

1. Now that you have completed your assessment tool, total your score from all the domains completed.
2. Obtain a ratio of strengths vs. learning opportunities by comparing the **Individual Strengths** total to the **Learning Opportunities** total. This ratio helps direct you in selecting areas for growth. There is no such thing as a good or bad ratio. See Appendix A for sample learning plan.

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH ASSESSMENT									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
							:		
	+	=		+	+	=			
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____		

SUPPORTIVE AND THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIPS									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
							:		
	+	=		+	+	=			
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____		

MANAGEMENT OF CANCER SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT SIDE EFFECTS									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
							:		
	+	=		+	+	=			
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____		

TEACHING AND COACHING									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
							:		
	+	=		+	+	=			
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____		

FACILITATING CONTINUITY OF CARE/NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
							:		
	+	=		+	+	=			
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____		

DECISION MAKING AND ADVOCACY									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
							:		
	+	=		+	+	=			
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____		

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
							:		
	+	=		+	+	=			
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____		

## APPENDIX A

### Case Study for CANO SON Standards Self-Assessment Tool

Lisa, a registered nurse for 6 years, has worked on the oncology inpatient unit (adjuvant/palliative chemotherapy/radiation therapy for solid tumours) of a tertiary care hospital for 3 years. Her previous nursing experience includes 2 years on a general medical surgical unit and one year in public health.

The unit manager and the educator on Lisa's unit recently implemented a new performance appraisal program using the CANO/ACIO Standards of Care. All the RNs on the unit are required to complete the CANO SON Nurse Standards and Competencies Self Assessment Tool and develop a learning plan for the coming year.

Lisa's completed self-assessment tool revealed the following ratios:

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH ASSESSMENT									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
3	11	14	5	2	0	7	14	:	7

SUPPORTIVE AND THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIPS									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
8	1	9	4	1	0	5	9	:	5

MANAGEMENT OF TREATMENT SIDE EFFECTS AND CANCER SYMPTOMS									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
6	29	35	18	6	4	28	35	:	28

TEACHING AND COACHING									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
4	0	4	7	3	0	10	4	:	10

FACILITATING CONTINUITY OF CARE/NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
0	7	7	2	2	0	4	7	:	4

DECISION MAKING AND ADVOCACY									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
0	0	= 0	8	2	0	= 10	0 : 10		

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP									
Individual Strengths			Learning Opportunities				Ratio		
Expert	Proficient	Total	Competent	Advanced Beginner	Novice	Total			
0	0	= 0	6	7	1	= 14	0 : 14		

*adapted from the College of Nurses of Ontario*

Using the information above, Lisa met with the manager and educator to develop a learning plan consisting of activities that would advance her practice in the domains of Teaching and Coaching, Decision Making and Advocacy, and Professional Practice and Leadership. Here is Lisa's learning plan:

Learning Goal <small>* A general statement about the overall direction of learning</small>	Learning Objectives <small>* Actions that will guide your learning: * SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely)</small>	Success Indicators <small>* How you will demonstrate you have met your objectives and goals</small>	Resource/Strategies <small>* What/who will help guide you</small>	Target Date
To teach the "At home chemotherapy care" patient information session for patients being discharged home with chemotherapy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Complete unit based adult learning styles self-teaching certificate</li> <li>§ Attend the patient information session</li> <li>§ Learn about the chemotherapy regimens</li> </ul>	I will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Pass the adult learning styles self test</li> <li>§ Deliver an aspect of the teaching session with a peer evaluating me</li> <li>§ State the complications of at home chemotherapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ My educator</li> <li>§ My APN</li> <li>§ My colleagues teaching the course</li> <li>§ Literature on adult learning styles and patient education</li> </ul>	September
To incorporate more decision-support in my practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Complete on-line decision support tutorial</li> <li>§ Discuss decision support theory with an expert</li> <li>§ Buddy with a practitioner engaged in decision support</li> </ul>	I will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Be able to perform a values based clarification exercise with a patient</li> <li>§ Be able to assess for decisional conflict</li> <li>§ Advocate for patients when they are feeling pressured to make a decision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Decision support experts</li> <li>§ My educator</li> <li>§ My APN</li> <li>§ Literature</li> <li>§ Decision Support Lab</li> </ul>	December
To co-chair the unit-based nursing practice committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Volunteer to lead a committee initiative/subgroup (i.e. to review and revise the safe administration standards)</li> <li>§ Determine my own personal leadership style</li> <li>§ Review the standards of practice with my educator and APN</li> </ul>	I will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Prepare the safe administration standards committee's review and recommendations</li> <li>§ Be able to discuss what leadership strategies best fit my style</li> <li>§ Be able to state the professional and practice standards pertinent to my practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ My manager</li> <li>§ My educator</li> <li>§ My APN</li> <li>§ Literature on leadership styles, effective communication</li> <li>§ Attend corporate nursing practice council</li> </ul>	April

## APPENDIX B

### Web Resources for Oncology Nurses

The following sites contain practice guidelines and/or evidence summaries of diseases and supportive care issues, drug monographs, telephone and symptom management, standards of care and other resources relevant to oncology nursing practice. This is a sample list of Canadian, American and Multinational sites.

Agency for Health Care Policy and Research(AHCPR).....	<a href="http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic">www.ahrq.gov/clinic</a>
Association of Pediatric Oncology Nurses (APON).....	<a href="http://www.apon.org">www.apon.org</a>
British Columbia Cancer Agency .....	<a href="http://www.bccancer.bc.ca">www.bccancer.bc.ca</a>
Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology(CANO). Education Resources.....	<a href="http://www.cano-acio.ca">www.cano-acio.ca</a>
Canadian Association of Psychosocial Oncology(CAPO) .....	<a href="http://www.capo.ca">www.capo.ca</a>
Canadian Cancer Resources Directory .....	<a href="http://www.cancerindex.org/clinks5c.htm#canada">www.cancerindex.org/clinks5c.htm#canada</a>
Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association. Norms of Practice.....	<a href="http://www.chpca.net">www.chpca.net</a>
Cancer Care Nova Scotia.....	<a href="http://www.cancercare.ns.ca">www.cancercare.ns.ca</a>
Cancer Care Ontario .....	<a href="http://www.cancercare.on.ca">www.cancercare.on.ca</a> . Telephone Nursing Practice and symptom Management Guidelines. <a href="http://www.cancercare.on.ca/documents/NursingTelephonePracticeGuidelines.pdf">www.cancercare.on.ca/documents/NursingTelephonePracticeGuidelines.pdf</a>
Cochrane Collaboration. Reviews.....	<a href="http://www.cochrane.org">www.cochrane.org</a>
College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta. See Related Links.....	<a href="http://www.nurses.ab.ca">www.nurses.ab.ca</a>
Evidence-Based Nursing .....	<a href="http://www.cebm.utoronto.ca">www.cebm.utoronto.ca</a>
Health Care Information Resources. Evidence Based Health Care Practitioners Links. McMaster. <a href="http://hsl.mcmaster.ca/tomflem/all.html">hsl.mcmaster.ca/tomflem/all.html</a>	
Hospice Palliative Care Nursing Standards of Practice .....	<a href="http://www.chpca.net">www.chpca.net</a>
Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer (MASCC). Education and Resource Centres .....	<a href="http://www.mascc.org">www.mascc.org</a>
National Institute of Health .....	<a href="http://www.nih.gov">www.nih.gov</a>
National Cancer Institute (NCI).....	<a href="http://www.cancer.gov">www.cancer.gov</a>
National Library of Medicine.....	<a href="http://www.nlm.nih.gov">www.nlm.nih.gov</a>
National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) .....	<a href="http://www.nccn.org">www.nccn.org</a>
Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) American.....	<a href="http://www.ons.org">www.ons.org</a>
Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) .....	<a href="http://www.rnao.org">www.rnao.org</a>



## APPENDIX C

### Glossary of Terms

#### Advocacy

Speaking in favor; support; to recommend publicly; the pleading of a case. I.e. champion.

#### Best Practice

Systematically developed statements to assist practitioner and patient decisions about appropriate health care for specific clinical (practice) circumstances (Field & Lohr, 1990).

#### Caring

Caring can be considered the behaviors, actions and attributes of nurses. Caring nurses listen to and are empathic with clients' points of views. Generally, caring requires recognition of clients as unique individuals whose goals nurses facilitate. Clients' values and choices are of primary consideration when planning and providing care and the nurses' own personal values must never interfere with the clients' right to receive care (College of Nurses of Ontario, 1999).

#### Coaching

The process of helping a person prepare for specific events or future changes; assist to anticipate. (Webster)

#### Competency

A competency describes expected behaviours of the nurse in meeting a practice standard. (CNO)

#### Complementary and Alternative Health Care (CAHC)

Diagnosis, treatment and/or prevention that complements mainstream medicine by contributing to a common whole, by satisfying a demand not met by conventional approaches, or by diversifying the conceptual framework of medicine. While CAM is the term most often used internationally, CAHC recognizes the diversity of practice areas, including medicine, and is the term most commonly used by Health Canada in policy context. (Health Canada, 2003)

#### Conceptual Understanding

Conceptual understanding implies knowledge of the idea, and how it relates to already acquired ideas. It also requires an understanding of the contexts within which the idea is applicable, as well as its limitations. Conceptual understanding enables a person to apply and adapt an idea flexibly to new situations. It is much more than just following learned procedures in familiar situations. (Burns & Grove, 1993)

## CONEP (CANO Oncology Nursing Education Project)

A project whose mandate was to develop standards, roles and competencies for oncology nurses in Canada.

### Determinant of Health

Something that fixes or decides causality; factors known to influence a person's state of health. e.g. poverty, nutrition. (Webster)

### End of Life Care

End of life care is the term used for the range of clinical and support services appropriate for dying people and their families. The goal of end of life care is the same regardless of the setting – to ensure the best quality of life for dying people and their families (A Provincial Framework for End-of-Life Care. British Columbia, Ministry of Health, 2006).

### Evidence Based Practice

The implementation of evidence-based decisions (Canadian Nurses Association, 1998). Aspects of quality that are considered when evaluating care include safety, competence, acceptability, effectiveness, appropriateness, efficiency and accessibility (Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation Standards of Care for Acute Care organizations, 2004). The term 'nursing practice' encompasses the various domains of nursing including direct care, education, research and administration.

### Family

Those closest to the patient in knowledge, care and affection. This includes: the biological family; the family of acquisition (related by marriage/contract); and the family of choice (not related biologically or by marriage/contract) (Canadian Palliative Care Association, 1995).

### Meaning of Illness

The understanding of and significance of a particular medical diagnosis for an individual and/or family; may be expressed as thoughts, words, statements, gestures, actions, painting, etc.

### Mentor

Someone who provides information, advice, and emotional support to a mentee or protégé. (Webster)

### Navigate

To direct one's course through any medium (Merriam-Webster's International Dictionary, 1986).

### Palliative Care

Palliative care is care aimed at alleviating suffering - physical, emotional, psychosocial, or spiritual - rather than curing. It is concerned with the comfort of the suffering individual. (Excerpt from Special Senate Report 1995, *Of Life and Death*)

## Research

Diligent, systematic inquiry or investigation to validate and refine existing knowledge and to generate new knowledge. (Webster)

## Research Utilization

It is the use of research findings in any and all aspects of one's work as a registered nurse. (Estabrooks, 1998). Examples include participating in surveys or research questionnaires, introducing practice changes based on research findings, reading articles, recruiting patients for clinical trials, participating as a research team member, identifying researchable problems.

## Self Determination

The inherent ability to select actions to take or avoid in one's life.

## Supportive Care

The provision of the necessary services as defined by those living with or affected by cancer to meet their physical, social, emotional, nutritional, informational, psychological, spiritual and practical needs throughout the spectrum of the cancer experience (Fitch, 2000).

## Survivorship

People who have been diagnosed with cancer and those in their lives who are affected. (Center for Disease Control, 2003)

## Systematic

According to a system: having a system, method or plan; orderly in arranging things or in getting them done. (Webster)

## Therapeutic Relationship

The therapeutic relationship is grounded in an interpersonal process that occurs between the nurse and the client (s). Therapeutic relationship is a purposeful, goal directed relationship that is directed at advancing the best interest and outcome of the client. (Registered Nurse's Association of Ontario, 2002).

## Validated

Meets criteria of research validity; has a solid foundation of truth or right and is free from defects or errors in reasoning. (Webster)



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