

LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Implementing the Advanced Practice Nursing Survey Results: Report by the Online Services and Education Team

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As one of the project teams formed after the 2001 Advanced Practice Nursing (APN) Retreat, the Online Services and Education (OS&E) Team was charged with

- Developing topics for online continuing education (CE) for oncology APNs
- Providing guidance and support to practicing APNs by facilitating educational programs that target topics identified by respondents as most important (Lynch, Cope, & Murphy-Ende, 2001)
- Working with the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Web site staff to develop educational programs, discussion forums, and resources to assist oncology APNs in clinical practice
- Examining the feasibility and content of resources for APNs with regard to personal digital assistant (PDA) technology.

Educational Needs Survey

Before locating or developing CE programs for the APN Virtual Community on the ONS Web site (visit http://apn.ons.wego.net/index.v3page?v2_group=0&p=160), as a first step, the team developed the Survey of Online Educational Needs to determine what educational topics would interest practicing APNs. Then the team wanted to determine the interest level in online CE courses and PDA technology, as well as current use of the two technologies.

The Survey of Online Educational Needs was comprised of 59 items in nine sections. Most of the items were presented as Likert scales, and participants were asked to rate their interest on a variety of educational topics: pharmacology, advanced physical assessment skills, laboratory findings interpretation, oncology procedures and skills, oncology disease management, symptom management, and general interest in online CE courses. Multiple-choice and open-ended questions were included in the sections for demographics and knowledge of PDAs.



Copies of the APN Educational Needs Survey were distributed to 1,800 clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) who were members of ONS via e-mail and at the 2002 ONS Congress in Washington, DC. A total of 23.8% of ONS CNSs and NPs (i.e., 428 APNs) responded to the survey.

Demographic Data

The primary roles identified were NP (44%), CNS (35%), and a blended CNS/NP role (15%). The respondents had been practicing in oncology nursing for an average of 15 years and had been practicing in an advanced practice role for an average of eight years. Forty-nine percent of the respondents were employed in hospitals or multihospital systems, and an additional 41% of the respondents were employed in physician offices or ambulatory and outpatient clinics. Only 16% of the respondents stated that they visited the ONS Web site once or more per month, 27% stated they visited the site once every two to three months, 36% stated they visited the site one to two times per year or less, and 21% had never used the Web site.

Educational Needs

The mean rating of interest in almost all topic areas ranged from 3–3.7 on a scale of 1–4 (1 = no interest to 4 = high interest) (see Table 1). Oncology procedures and skills was the only topic that APNs rated as less than a 3, which may be related to the perceived difficulty in learning such technical skills over the Internet.

More than 700 additional topics of interest were listed by the respondents, and many of the topics were mentioned by several APNs. The extensive and varied list of topics reflects the wide range of responsibilities and activities in APN practice and the APNs' interest in a broad selection of educational topics.

APNs are interested in taking online CE courses, as evidenced by a mean rating of 3.5 on that question. Respondents were interested in taking online CE courses for a variety of reasons.

- To increase knowledge in a specific area of oncology (n = 354)
- To earn CE credits (n = 299)

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