Oncology End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium Training Program: Improving Palliative Care in Cancer

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Purpose/Objectives: To describe an evaluation of the oncology version of the End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC–Oncology) training program, which is designed to provide oncology nurses with the knowledge and materials necessary to disseminate palliative care information to their colleagues in local chapters of the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS).

Data Sources: Participant reports.

Data Synthesis: 124 nurses representing 74 ONS chapters attended the first two courses. Dyads of ONS members from local chapters applied to attend ELNEC and completed surveys regarding their goals and expectations for implementing end-of-life (EOL) education and training after completion of the program. Participants educated more than 26,000 nurses after attending the program, including 7,593 nurses within their ONS chapters and 18,517 colleagues within their workplaces. Barriers to implementation included a lack of funding and time constraints. Participants sought additional palliative care learning opportunities, including attending other workshops, subscribing to palliative care journals, and becoming involved in committees focused on palliative care.

Conclusion: The ELNEC–Oncology program is a national collaboration with ONS that provides oncology nurses with the tools and expertise to effectively disseminate palliative care content to colleagues within their local chapters and work settings.

Implications for Nursing: EOL care information remains critical to the science of oncology nursing, and ELNEC–Oncology provides an effective strategy for disseminating the information.

Key Points . . .

- ➤ End-of-life education is extremely important to oncology nursing.
- ➤ The oncology version of the End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC–Oncology) program is very helpful in improving palliative care education with Oncology Nursing Society local chapter members and within course participants' work settings.
- ➤ Participants sought other palliative care professional development opportunities after attending ELNEC–Oncology, including subscribing to end-of-life care–oriented publications, attending additional workshops or conferences, and seeking clinical experiences or volunteering to increase their skills.

Almost 10 million people in the United States currently are living with a diagnosis of cancer. Despite innovative agents and technologies, an estimated 600,000 people will die of cancer in 2007 (Jemal et al., 2007). Unfortunately, studies document that many of those with cancer or other life-threatening illnesses will die in institutionalized settings, with unrelieved symptoms, and without their goals or wishes addressed (Coyle, Adelhardt, Foley, & Portenoy, 1990; Desbiens & Wu, 2000; Drake, Frost, & Collins, 2003; Hall, Schroder, & Weaver, 2002; Lichter & Hunt, 1990; McCarthy, Phillips, Zhong, Drews, & Lynn, 2000; Morita, Ichiki, Tsunoda, Inoue, & Chihara, 1998). A crisis in cancer care exists despite significant attention to the need for professional education about end-of-life (EOL) care. An Institute of Medicine (1997) report

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