Foundation Program in Oncology and Hematology for Newly Recruited Nurses

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There is a constant need to educate and upskill nurses who are new to oncology settings. This article describes the outcomes of an education quality improvement (QI) project at an Organisation of European Cancer Institutes–accredited cancer center in Ireland. Using an action research (AR) methodology, a hospital-based education program was designed and evaluated. Program development occurred over two AR cycles.

First-cycle evaluation of nurse participants found that the course curriculum was relevant and improved nurses’ confidence in their clinical abilities. In the second cycle, the class changed from in-person to online learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Evaluation data suggested that online learning was acceptable, supported greater access to the program, and offered financial and time-saving benefits.

Methodology

The QI project used an action research (AR) methodology described by Coughlan and Coghlan (2002), relying on nurse experts to establish a formal education program and bridging content from the orientation process and postgraduate curricula.

Study Site

This project was conducted at the Hematology, Oncology, and Palliative Care directorate at St. James’s Hospital, an Organisation of European Cancer Institutes–accredited cancer center in Dublin, Ireland. The program was designed for newly recruited nurses who would be providing hematology-oncology care. Approximately 200 nurses are employed at the directorate, ranging from qualified general nurses with without specialized education in oncology or hematology to nurses with specialized postgraduate education and experience, including clinical nurse specialists, advanced nurse practitioners, and clinical nurse managers.

Program Overview

Nurses learn and acquire knowledge when they work with experts and have access to their expertise. A study by Rosenzweig et al. (2012) found that nurses’ learning is influenced by their work environment and that disease-specific education is dependent on the cancer center where a nurse