

# Oncology Nurses Can Build Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Partnerships

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Nurses can inform and lead patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR) projects that address care-related questions prioritized by patients. However, PCOR projects may fail to materialize because time constraints create barriers to forming partnerships for the advancement of research. Even in established relationships, PCOR partners (i.e., physicians, nurses, and patients) may disagree about the relative importance of a research question and how best to engage partners. This article is designed to pique the interest of oncology nurses and reveal opportunities to engage in and colead PCOR projects. It illustrates three fundamental steps to prepare oncology nurses for developing PCOR questions and participating in a PCOR project team.

## AT A GLANCE

- Patient engagement in research is essential to improving patient outcomes.
- Nurses are well positioned to inform and lead PCOR.
- By developing trusting patient relationships, nurses can facilitate lasting research partnerships.

## KEYWORDS

nursing research; patient engagement; PCOR; patient-centered outcomes; PCORI

## DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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Nurses advance patient-centered care by acknowledging the value of patient experiences and by respecting patient treatment preferences and goals (Kwame & Petrucka, 2021). Patient engagement is an increasingly recognized attribute of patient-centered outcomes. In addition to providing patient care, engagement includes asking patients to inform research intended to discover treatments that contribute to superior patient outcomes. Frank et al. (2014) defined patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR) as the evaluation of questions and outcomes meaningful to patients and caregivers. The PCOR Institute (PCORI, 2022a) demonstrates a long-standing commitment to this effort. In July 2022, PCORI (2022b) launched a \$36 million initiative focused on advancing the science of patient engagement in research. This commitment provides an opportunity for nurses to collaborate with patients and other care team members to develop research that patients value.

Previous initiatives have rightfully encouraged novice and experienced nurses to undertake research, particularly PCOR (Patel, 2018). PCOR addresses the following patient-centric questions (Barksdale et al., 2014):

- Given a patient's personal characteristics, conditions, and preferences, what should I expect will happen to a patient?
- What are a patient's treatment options, and what are the benefits and harms of those options?
- What can a patient do to improve their chances of achieving patient-preferred outcomes?

Inadequate patient engagement in decision-making has been identified as a key challenge to the delivery of high-quality cancer care (Geiger et al., 2020). Therefore, PCOR approaches may enhance cancer care delivery and encourage patient-clinician collaboration in the design and conduct of studies (Geiger et al., 2020) (see Figure 1). In addition, PCOR provides nurses and patients the opportunity to colead investigations, ultimately informing patient-centered care.

## Oncology Nurses and PCOR

Nurses are particularly poised to inform and lead PCOR projects. In general, nurses spend more time than doctors with their patients, with two-thirds of their time spent undertaking communication and coordination activities, such as patient interviews, team conferences, nursing handoffs, and care planning (Kwame & Petrucka, 2021). Thus, nurses are acutely aware of the