

Oncology Certification for Nurses

Because of rapid scientific and technological advances in cancer care, nurses must maintain current and highly specialized knowledge to provide quality care. Continuous professional development and earning specialty nursing certification are important considerations to maintain pace with the rapid advances in cancer care knowledge.

Oncology nurses are encouraged to participate in continuing nursing education (CNE) activities offered by accredited providers. Nurses may opt to participate in assessment-based certificate programs which aid in acquiring skills, knowledge, and competencies related to a narrow scope of content, for example the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS)/Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC) Radiation Therapy Certificate Course. This certificate course awards a certificate of added qualification as well as a CNE certificate, indicating the participant has successfully demonstrated specialized knowledge and skills related to radiation therapy. In addition to participation in CNE and, when appropriate, certificate programs, oncology nurses should aspire to earn specialty nursing certification. Oncology nursing certification evaluates the mastery of knowledge and skills within a broad scope of content and provides validation of the specialized knowledge and experience required for competent performance.

The American Board of Nursing Specialties (2016) defined nursing certification as the formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills, and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes. ONCC develops and administers certification programs that provide tangible evidence that nurses have the knowledge required to effectively provide care to patients experiencing the complex problems associated with a diagnosis of cancer throughout the disease continuum. Specifically, oncology nursing certification speaks to nursing knowledge of cancer prevention, treatment, survivorship, palliative care, and end-of-life care and reflects knowledge across treatment types, including surgical, medical, and radiation therapies.

ONCC is an independent organization that is affiliated closely with the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) and the Association of Pediatric Hematology Oncology Nurses. ONCC certification programs are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies. This independent accrediting body has established nationally acknowledged standards and criteria for the recognition of certification programs and uses rigorous processes to determine whether programs meet their standards. ONCC certifications are validated through empirical data attained from role delineation studies conducted periodically for each certification program.

It is the position of ONS that

- Oncology nursing certification provided by ONCC is sound and beneficial to patients and society at large.
- Oncology nurses work toward, achieve, and maintain certification.
- ONCC certification programs are rigorous and meet nationally recognized standards that are reliable and legally defensible measurements of oncology nursing knowledge.
- Regardless of the healthcare setting, certification benefits patients and their families, nurses, and employers. Oncology nursing certification validates that nurses have met stringent requirements for knowledge and experience and are qualified to provide competent oncology care.
- Employers demonstrate their commitment to providing the highest quality of care to patients with cancer throughout the health and illness continuum by hiring certified nurses, supporting nurses in attaining and maintaining certification, rewarding nurses who become certified, and informing patients and the public about the certification status of their nursing staff.
- Healthcare consumers have a right to know the qualifications of those responsible for their care. Nurses should inform patients of their certification and explain its meaning. Certified nurses should display their credentials on their name badges, and employers should support such display.

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Approved by the ONS Board of Directors February 2004; revised May 2006, January 2009; reviewed February 2012, January 2013, January 2014, January 2015, October 2017, March 2019.

References

American Board of Nursing Specialties. (2016). About us. Retrieved from <http://www.nursingcertification.org/about>