

Education of the Registered Nurse (RN) Who Administers and Cares for the Individual Receiving Antineoplastic Therapies

Specialized education, preparation, and training of nurses who administer antineoplastic cancer therapies are needed to ensure a safe level of care for patients receiving treatment and the clinicians administering these agents. The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) defines the process and content to educate nurses who administer treatments and care for patients receiving antineoplastic cancer therapies, which we define as chemotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy.

It is the position of ONS that

- RNs are responsible for all aspects of administering and monitoring cancer therapies, including chemotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy.
- State practice acts should be consulted when developing institutional policies and procedures.
- Educational programs for nurses administering chemotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy are comprehensive, current, and evidence-based, and appropriate for the person, population, and setting. They consist of didactic learning followed by the successful completion of a clinical practicum under the auspices of the nurses' institution or supporting agency.
- Competency is assessed and reinforced annually.
- The following content is included in all introductory and annual competency reassessment programs developed for nurses administering cancer therapies:

Types of treatment, classification of agents, and routes of administration

Pharmacology of agents, regardless of indications for use

Pertinent molecular biomarkers, including genomic assays

Chemotherapy and radiotherapy protectants

Principles of safe preparation, storage, labeling, transportation, and disposal of agents

Safe administration procedures

Procedures for safe handling of hazardous drugs including spill management

Appropriate use and disposal of personal protective equipment

Use of engineering controls, if applicable to your practice setting

Use of closed-system drug transfer devices

Assessment, monitoring, and management of patients receiving therapy

Medication safety and system safeguards, such as infusion pump safety features

Appropriate procedures for emergency preparedness to include infusion reactions and extravasation

Appropriate documentation of treatment administration, patient education, and planned follow-up care and testing

Patient and family/caregiver education for these agent(s), specific to side effects and related symptom management, and processes for urgent and ongoing follow-up

Education and coordination of post-treatment care and testing, adverse events, and long-term side effects, physical and psychosocial impacts of a cancer diagnosis and treatment, and follow-up care during survivorship

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