Standards of Oncology Nursing Education: Generalist and Advanced Practice Levels (4th Edition)

Introduction

The scope of oncology nursing practice encompasses clinical practice, education, consultation, research, and administration. Oncology nursing practice is focused on the care of individuals, families, groups, and communities at risk for or with a diagnosis of cancer. The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) maintains that nurses involved in cancer care have the responsibility to develop and demonstrate knowledge and skills that display competence in the field.

In 1982 ONS published the *Outcome Standards for Cancer Nursing Education at the Fundamental Level*. This was followed by the publication of *The Scope of Advanced Oncology Nursing Practice* that was developed by the Clinical Practice and Education Committees of ONS in 1987, and provided the forum for the development of *Standards of Oncology Nursing Education: Advanced Practice Level*. In 1989, these two standards were revised and consolidated into one document, the first edition of the *Standards of Oncology Nursing Education: Generalist and Advanced Practice Levels*. A second edition was completed in 1995, and the third in 2003.

The standards outlined in the 2015 edition reflect the demands of a rapidly changing health care environment that significantly challenge health care, cancer care, and the oncology nursing profession and how oncology nurses are educated to meet these challenges.

The 2011 *Institute of Medicine (IOM) Report on the Future of Nursing* centered on several key points and associated recommendations to ensure that nurses practice to the full potential of
their education and to enable nurses to achieve higher levels of education and training through improved education systems. The projected increase in demand for services related to cancer prevention, treatment, survivorship, and end-of-life care have important implications for the future of oncology nursing and require that oncology nurses have the education and training necessary to provide optimal cancer care across the continuum of care.

The Standards of Oncology Education: Generalist and Advanced Practice Levels provide educational guidelines for oncology nurses and educators in order to accomplish the following:

• Enhance the quality of oncology nursing education
• Improve the quality of cancer care for the public in a rapidly changing health care environment
• Promote the standardization of oncology nursing academic preparation.
Guidelines for use

This document is designed as a reference for oncology nurses, educators in clinical settings, and faculty members in schools of nursing. It provides comprehensive guidelines for oncology nursing education that may be used by students and/or educators to accomplish the following:

- Plan, update, and evaluate generalist level education offered in diploma, associate or baccalaureate degree programs
- Plan, update, and evaluate advanced level education offered at the graduate level
- Plan and evaluate continuing education programs at the generalist and advanced practice levels
- Assess individual knowledge of oncology nursing care
- Assist with continuing education planning.

The standards outlined in this document are descriptive statements designed to guide the achievement of quality education for nurses. The standards have been developed to reflect the structure, process, and outcomes of educational offerings.

The following assumptions were made in the development of these standards:

1. Oncology nursing is an established specialty.
2. Oncology nursing practice is based on effective communication; therapeutic, theory based, and research supported nursing interventions; and critical thinking skills.
3. Oncology nursing is practiced at both the generalist and advanced levels in a variety of settings and across the continuum of cancer care.
4. Oncology nurses have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to continuously improve the quality and safety of cancer care.
5. Professional nurses function in collaboration with other disciplines.
Oncology Generalist Level Education

Standard I. Faculty

The faculty is prepared academically and clinically to teach oncology nursing in a variety of settings to diverse learners.

Criteria

Faculty

1. Has relevant and current education and/or clinical experience in oncology nursing and Oncology Certified Nurse (OCN®) and/or Advanced Oncology Certification (AOCN®, AOCNP®, AOCNS®) certification demonstrating expertise in oncology nursing.

2. Utilizes the Statement on the Scope and Standards of Oncology Nursing Practice: Generalist and Advanced Practice (ONS, 2013) and ONS Leadership Competencies (2012) to inform the development, implementation, and evaluation of education activities.

3. These criteria are specific to classroom and clinical faculty teaching oncology focused content.

Standard II. Resources

Clinical and educational resources are adequate to meet the learning objectives related to teaching oncology nursing.

Criteria

Resources

1. Educational materials specific to oncology nursing are peer-reviewed, evidence-based, current, available, and accessible to the faculty and students.
2. Clinical and laboratory resources are available and accessible to practice the skills relevant for oncology nursing practice.

3. Clinical experiences provide access to people across the life span and the cancer continuum.

4. Clinical experiences provide access to culturally and economically diverse populations.

**Standard III. Curriculum**

Basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for the delivery of competent nursing care to people at risk for or experiencing cancer are included in the curriculum.

**Criteria**

Curriculum includes:


2. Comprehensive delineation that inform clinical reasoning, critical thinking, and leadership, and clinical practice.

3. Evidence-based content relevant to the practice of oncology nursing and is based on the current ONCC OCN blueprint that includes: health promotion and disease prevention; screening, early detection and diagnosis; scientific basis for practice including research; cancer treatment modalities; symptom management; psychosocial dimensions of care; oncologic emergencies; sexuality; survivorship; and end of life care.

4. Content on professional performance issues in oncology nursing including safety, quality improvement, care coordination, informatics, legal and ethical issues.

5. Description of collaborative practice models within nursing and inter-professional teams to achieve quality cancer care.
Standard IV. Teaching-Learning Process

Teaching-learning theories are applied to the development, implementation, and evaluation of learning experiences related to oncology nursing practice.

Criteria

Faculty

1. Systematically collects and analyzes assessment data in order to identify cognitive, psychomotor, and affective learning needs of the student cohort.

2. Develops a teaching plan that includes:
   - Behavioral objectives based on identified learning needs
   - Content to meet identified objectives
   - Teaching strategies and learning experiences that promote active learning
   - Criteria and methods for evaluation

3. Implements the teaching plan in an environment conducive to learning.

4. Collects data from the student and other sources to evaluate achievement of learning objectives and effectiveness of instruction.

5. Modifies teaching-learning process based on evaluation data.

Standard V. The Oncology Nurse Generalist

Nurses assume responsibilities commensurate with their educational and experiential preparation or acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to practice in the role of the oncology nurse generalist.

Criteria

The oncology nurse generalist
1. Utilizes the nursing process including the assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation in delivering nursing care to diverse populations across the continuum of cancer care in a variety of settings.

2. Collaborates and communicates within nursing and inter-professional teams to provide safe and effective cancer care.

3. Works in partnership with researchers to identify the need for and generate new knowledge for practice.

4. Uses appropriate documents, such as ANA’s Code of Ethics for Nurses (2015) and the ONS State on the Scope and Standards of Oncology Practice (2013) and ONS Leadership Competencies (2012), to guide professional oncology nursing practice and understand the ethical and legal implications of that practice.

5. Assumes responsibility for personal and professional development in oncology nursing including self-care, leadership and life-long learning.
Oncology Advanced Practice Education

Standard I. Faculty

The faculty is prepared academically and clinically to teach graduate-level oncology nursing to diverse learners.

Criteria

Faculty

1. Has masters’ or doctoral level preparation, advanced practice licensure, and specialty certification in oncology nursing reflective of expertise.
2. Utilizes the ONS Statement on the Scope and Standards on Oncology Nursing Practice: Generalist and Advanced Practice (2013) in education, practice and/or student supervision.
3. Applies evidence-based findings to oncology nursing education curriculum and clinical practice experiences.

Standard II. Resources

Clinical, educational, and research resources are adequate to achieve graduate program objectives related to oncology nursing.

Criteria

Resources

1. Peer reviewed and evidence based educational materials specific to oncology nursing are current, available, and accessible to faculty and students.
2. Oncology clinical practice, education, administration, and research experiences are available as appropriate for the program objectives.
a. Advanced level clinical practice opportunities with culturally and economically diverse populations are available and accessible across the life span and the cancer continuum of care in a variety of collaborative oncology settings.

b. Oncology research opportunities and mentors appropriate for the program objectives are available to the student.

c. Experienced oncology nurses in advanced practice roles are available to serve as preceptors for graduate students.

Standard III. Curriculum

Specialized knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for the implementation of oncology nursing at the advanced practice level are included in the curriculum.

Criteria

Curriculum includes

1. Opportunities for specialization in oncology nursing consistent with advanced practice as described in the ONS Statement on the Scope and Standards on Oncology Nursing Practice: Generalist and Advanced Practice (2013) and ONS Leadership Competencies (2012).

2. Application of theories and research to the roles in oncology nursing at the advanced practice level.

3. Individualized learning opportunities based on previous knowledge, experience, learning style, and professional goals.

Evidence-based content based on the current ONCC AOCNS/AOCNP blueprints and include: screening, prevention, early detection and genetic risk; diagnosis, staging and treatment planning; cancer treatment; side effect and symptom management; oncologic emergencies;
survivorship; end-of-life care; psychosocial issues; coordination of care; professional practice; roles of the advanced practice nurse.

5. Integration of healthcare trends, health policy, legislation and regulatory, and reimbursement issues.

6. Education and experiences that focus on the development of advanced clinical reasoning, critical thinking, leadership, and clinical practice skills.

7. Opportunities to develop communication and collaboration skills to function effectively within nursing and inter-professional teams to achieve quality cancer care.

**Standard IV. Teaching-Learning Process**

Teaching-learning theories are applied to the development, implementation, and evaluation of learning experiences related to advanced oncology nursing.

**Criteria**

Faculty

1. Systematically obtains and analyzes assessment data from the student cohort in order to identify cognitive, psychomotor, and affective learning needs.

2. Develops a teaching plan that includes:
   - Behavioral objectives based on identified learning needs
   - Content to meet identified objectives
   - Teaching strategies and learning experiences that promote active learning and critical thinking by the student
   - Criteria and methods for evaluation

3. Implements teaching plans in an environment conducive to learning.
4. Collects data from students to evaluate achievement of learning objectives and teaching instruction.

5. Modifies teaching-learning process based on evaluation data.

**Standard V. Student: The Advanced Practice Oncology Nurse**

Graduate-level nursing education program graduates assume responsibilities in oncology nursing commensurate with their educational preparation and experience.

**Criteria**

The advanced practice oncology nurse

1. Utilizes knowledge of existing theory, research, and evidenced-based guidelines for use in the implementation of an advanced practice role.

2. Applies advanced nursing practice skills in the provision, guidance, and evaluation of care for individuals at risk for or experiencing cancer.

3. Applies appropriate theories to meet the educational needs of people at risk for or diagnosed with cancer, members of the inter-professional healthcare team, and the public.

4. Provides leadership in promoting ethical decision making, implementing planned change, and facilitating resource allocation to improve the quality of cancer care.

5. Provides expert consultation based on theory and advanced clinical knowledge to other healthcare professionals or healthcare consumers.

6. Contributes to the development of nursing theory, research, and advanced practice.

Glossary

Advanced practice level— Level of practice for a registered nurse with master’s, doctoral, or post-doctoral education who applies theoretical knowledge in a specialized field.

Cancer continuum — Care at all phases of illness and includes prevention, detection, treatment, survivorship and end-of-life care.

Critical thinking — A cognitive process that involves the use of facts, principles, theories, abstractions, deductions, interpretations, and evaluation of arguments. The cognitive skills of comprehension, application, synthesis, and evaluation are utilized.

Cultural competence — Refers to being sensitive and responsive to issues related to culture, race, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Cultural competence indicates translation of cultural sensitivity and awareness into credible behaviors and actions.

Diversity — Differences in race and ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic stratum, sexual orientation and age.

Evidence-based practice — Integrating best current evidence with clinical expertise and patient/family preferences and values into nursing care.

Generalist level — Level of practice for a registered nurse who possesses general knowledge and skills applicable to diversified health concerns.

Quality Improvement — The use of data to monitor outcomes and the use of improvement methods to design and test changes to continuously improve the quality and safety of the healthcare system.

Quality cancer care — The degree to which health services for individuals and populations increase the likelihood of desired health outcomes and are consistent with current professional knowledge. Good quality means providing patients with appropriate services in a technically
competent manner, with good communication, shared decision making, and cultural sensitivity.

(from IOM Chapter 4, page 2 in Ensuring Quality cancer care)
References


Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation. *OCN®, AOCNS®, and AOCNP® test candidate handbooks.*


ONS (2014) Lifelong learning for professional oncology nurses position statement

https://www.ons.org/advocacy-policy/positions/education/lifelong


https://www.ons.org/advocacy-policy/positions/education/apn

Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) Competencies http://qsen.org/competencies/