



EdCaN CONSENSUS SURVEYS RESULTS SUMMARY - AUGUST 2007

Aim:

The aim of the initial phase of the EdCaN consensus survey was to identify the core values of the Australian Specialist Cancer Nurse and to seek agreement on the practice domains and activities of a Specialist Cancer Nurse in an Australian context. The results of this survey were then used to inform the second phase of the EdCaN consensus survey focusing on competency standards for the Specialist Cancer Nurse.

Design:

Two project specific cross-sectional surveys were sent to cancer nurses around Australia. The first survey incorporated four sections: 1) demographic 2) listing of 5 core values of a Specialist Cancer Nurse; 3) level of agreement for 8 suggested domains of practice and 4) rating of importance of listed 65 activities to their nursing practice. The second survey gathered data regarding: 1) demographics 2) level of agreement with listed values, and 3) level of agreement with 57 competency standards for Specialist Cancer Nurses

Results:

The demographic results for both surveys were similar. The nurse providing care for people affected by cancer is typically over 40 years, female, with more than 10 years nursing experience and involved in providing chemotherapy.

Respondent demographics	Survey 1 n=239	Survey 2 n=280
Female respondents	95%	93%
Highest age group 40-49 yrs	42%	42%
Worked as a nurse for between 25-35 years	51%	33%
Worked in oncology for between 0-10 years	42%	39%
Worked in metropolitan areas	74%	71%

The category "Nurse with an interest in cancer" (indicated by 26% of respondents) appears to be a more acceptable classification than "Beginning Cancer Nurses" (indicated by 5% of respondents) as used in the first survey.

Type of Nurse - Survey 1	Total
Beginning Cancer Nurse	12
Specialist Cancer Nurse	129
Advanced Practice Nurse	81
Type of Nurse - Survey 1	Total

Type of Nurse - Survey 2	Total
Nurse with an interest in cancer	72
Specialist Cancer Nurse	120
Advanced Practice Nurse	66
Other	22

Survey Questions	Survey 1	Survey 2
Primary area of practice	Chemotherapy 60%, 143	Chemotherapy 51%, 144
Main area of work	Clinical practice with cancer patients 68%, 163	Clinical practice with cancer patients 71%, 200

Four core value statements of a) Compassion, empathy and respect for people affected by cancer; b) Professional therapeutic relationships with people affected by cancer; c) Respect for the unique health needs, preferences and circumstances of people affected by cancer; and d) A commitment to achieving optimal outcomes for individual's across the cancer journey were agreed to by a minimum of 92% of respondents

The four Competency Domains identified by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (Provision and coordination of care; Collaborative and therapeutic practice; Quality improvement; and Critical thinking and analysis) were applied to the cancer setting and draft competencies were developed using information from the first survey, a review of literature, and expert opinion. Over 85% of respondents agreed that the competencies reflected the practice of a Specialist Cancer Nurse and that the competencies were relevant to their practice.

Results did not show clear links between education and the self-classification of Specialist or Advanced Practice Nurses. There was a trend however to Advanced Practice Nurses having more oncology experience.

Implications:

Given the rate of cancer within Australia it is crucial to provide all nurses with a general understanding of cancer in order to give proficient care to people affected by cancer. In considering the development of a cancer nursing workforce to meet future needs, there appears to be a gap in the provision of cancer specific units included in the undergraduate bachelor degrees.

A clear definition of the education and experience required to be 'classified' as a Specialist Cancer Nurse, and an Advanced Practice Nurse may assist the nursing profession to identify a career pathway in cancer nursing. As yet the cancer nurse population do not appear to be clear on suggested requirements.

The results from the two cross-sectional surveys will be used to inform the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum to be developed by the EdCaN project. In particular the need to address the safe and efficient delivery of chemotherapy will need to be addressed given that over 50% of respondents from survey 1 and 2 currently provide chemotherapy services. The draft competencies of a Specialist Cancer Nurse, now agreed upon by over 85% of the respondents, are able to be used as a basis for the development of learning needs and outcomes to be achieved. The competency standards for the Specialist Cancer Nurse can also be used as a basis for developing standards for Advanced Practice Cancer Nurses and nurses with an interest in cancer care.