Introduction:
Cancer patients take a long journey from diagnosis to treatment and beyond. Nurses provide care and support to patients throughout the journey. However, the nursing presence is increasingly invisible to the patients and to other disciplines in the modern oncology. The objective of this qualitative study was to understand the experiences of oncology nurses in patient counseling and support services in the ambulatory care setting, and to find the uniqueness of nursing.

Material and method:
Using grounded theory approach, we conducted a qualitative study with four focus group interviews of 21 oncology nurses currently providing counseling and support services for all types of cancer patients in Japan. We asked oncology nurses about their experiences with counseling and support services for cancer patients, their perceived role, and their values and beliefs in nursing care using a semi-structured interview guide.

Research period: March - April, 2013

Results and Discussion:
The conceptual model of the power of nursing was developed from the results of the present study to guide patients across the cancer trajectory emerged as three phases: (1) connecting with the patient (shared needs); (2) personalized coordination (shared action); and (3) realizing the patient’s potential (reassurance). (Fig. 1)

(1) Connecting with the patient (shared needs)
Oncology nurses guide patients by identifying patients’ true needs based on an established relationship and giving special attention to the patient’s self.

This typically began by oncology nurses “We care about you” attitude to show acceptance of their patients.

“First, I thank my patients for coming to me. I admire their strength to face their problems. I try to fully accept the patient, and share his or her suffering.”

The nurses acknowledged that it is a challenge to identify the patient’s true needs. In fact, they took considerable time and energy to build trust with their patients and used their professional skills to elucidate the patient’s needs.

“If the patient’s real concern is identified, it is relatively easy to connect it (to possible solutions). However, identifying the real issue is very challenging.”

(2) Personalized coordination (shared action)
The nurses focus on the patient’s daily life, and provide personalized coordination.

“We should focus on patients’ real issues and navigate them to the right direction. We decide whether the patient’s problem can be solved within our scope of practice or requires the next level of care.”

Based on individual situations, the nurses set goals and offered practical action plans.

“Nurses are more flexible to respond to individual patients.”

The oncology nurses recognize the professional responsibility involved in patient-care coordination, but felt that it was a rewarding assignment. “We have a significant responsibility that comes along with it. However, it may be that only nurses can do it.”

(3) Realizing the patient’s potential (reassurance)
The nurses develop the patient’s potential. Patient-centered care can be provided in non-physical care settings such as counseling and support services.

The oncology nurses encouraged patients to move forward. “I encourage the patient to take the next step.” The ultimate goal of nursing is to realize the patient’s potential.

“I always try to encourage patients to feel confident about something, even a very small thing. Something positive, you know.”

One of the nurses described a norm of the patient-nurse relationship.

“Together (with the patient), I follow their process, and I just want to say ‘Go!’ when the time comes. I wish to have a relationship with patients in which I give them a little supportive push to achieve what they have decided to do.”

Conclusion:
This conceptual model describes the uniqueness and significance of nursing. It can be used as a tool to realize the full potential of nurses in practice, and to build professional identity of nurses. Oncology nurses can take a leadership role in enhancing the visibility of the nurses in multidisciplinary environments.

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