Advancement of the Cancer Care Nurse in Austria

From advanced training to specialist roles.

H. Titzer, RN & Mag. C. Schneider-Worliczek, RN
AHOP – Austrian Association of Haematology / Oncology Nurses

Introduction

The advancement of Cancer Care Nursing in Austria reflects a decision of the AHOP to enhance the status of nurses working in the field of Haematology or Oncology. The need for specialist Cancer Care Nurses is highlighted by an increase in the complexity of treatment for patients suffering from cancer (OECD, 2011). The OECD (2009) has also registered an increase in the life expectancy of people with chronic diseases. This growth is based on medical advances.

The aim of the initiative to establish a Cancer Care Nurse in Austria brings the education of a cancer nurses to a comparable level within the EU and makes an important step towards improved quality of care and enhanced nursing competencies (AHOP, 2013).

Methods

The first step in 2010 was to define the remit and focus of the project. In the same year a survey took place in the Vienna General Hospital (AKH) to identify wards on which cancer treatment was given. Afterwards we developed a job profile, fields of activity, skills and competences of a Cancer Care Nurse.

The paper “Cancer Care Nurse Initiative” was published in 2012. In 2013 we adapted the first draft and compared the existing education programmes for Oncology Nursing in Austria.

Results

The AHOP defines the Cancer Care Nurse according to the Austrian model of specialist nursing competences (ÖGKV, 2011). The literature review showed the suitable definition of a Nurse Specialist (Schober & Affara, 2008). Results of the survey in the AKH showed that 24 wards undertake cancer treatment. (no. of patients = 82)

Our comparison of different education programmes in Austria (n=7) via expert consultation showed considerable variations in the duration and content of educational programmes. (range 540-800 hours)

Conclusion

The contribution of Cancer Care Nurses on the haematology and oncology wards is essential to the delivery of high quality care during cancer treatment. The AHOP will be starting 3 pilot projects in 2014 to implement a Cancer Care Nurse on acute wards.

Email contact: h.titzer@ahop.at