The month of April has been filled with activities for EONS. For example, it was fantastic to meet and discuss breast care nursing issues with nurses at the Interconference Breast Cancer Meeting in Sarajevo. Despite language barriers, a very skilled translator provided us with the possibility to effectively communicate to conduct workshops and discussions. It is a humbling experience to meet nurses that lack the infrastructure we are used to and despite this, provide support to patients throughout their illness and treatment. I would like to extend my sincere thank you to the EONS members that participated as faculty for this meeting and also to the European School of Oncology for inviting EONS to collaborate in this conference.

A group of EONS members are working hard on developing new guidelines for the web-based toolkit. The topic for the new guideline is "Extravasation guidelines" which was prioritised as a useful guideline for our members.

I recently attended a breast cancer patient summit held in Prague. The meeting focused on discussions between health care professionals and patient organisations and a central topic was how we can collaborate better in the future.

At the last Advisory Council it was decided that EONS should start developing a breast cancer nursing module as addendum to the core curriculum and this month a work group met in Paris to start the development process. The goal is to start writing the first part of this module which will focus on treatment of symptoms and side effects. I look forward to working with this expert group in moving the project forward.

With this short summary of EONS activities I would like to wish you a very restful summer holiday and hope to meet many of you at the ECCO conference in Barcelona in September.

Sincerely,
Yvonne Wengström

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A Prostate Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist

Janette Nichol, Prostate Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist, Guys and St Thomas NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK

In September 2000 the NHS Cancer Plan (DOH, 2000) was published heralding a new way forward for cancer services in the UK. It aimed to save more lives, ensure people with cancer get the right professional support and care as well as the best treatments, tackle the inequalities in health and to build for the future through investment in the cancer workforce, so that the NHS never fell behind in cancer care again.

This plan required a huge increase in the cancer workforce and in particular key roles to support and inform patients through this process. One of these was the Prostate Cancer Nurse Specialist.

The Prostate Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist role has been described as ‘the provision of an all-encompassing service for patients and their families going through investigation, diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of prostate disease’. (Higgins, Professional Nurse May 2000).

The origins of this role lie within the necessity to address the needs of men with or at risk of prostate disease, who are disadvantaged by virtue of age, isolation, economic status, education, disability or ethnicity and to ensure that systems are developed which are accessible, inclusive and sensitive of these factors.

In the UK this role traditionally involves, some or all of the following. Diagnostics, counselling, patient follow up and symptom control, representing patients at multi-disciplinary meetings ensuring that their needs are assertively presented and that appropriate care packages are developed, counselling patients pre and post treatment, providing education and training, data collection, audit, research and liaison with government and charitable organizations.

The complex mix of skills required to fulfill this role require a versatility rarely seen in other health related professionals, from diagnostician to counsellor and friend. Formalized training for this role has been lacking until fairly recently. The introduction of specialist cancer courses through higher education at both degree and masters level, has reinvented UK specialist cancer nurse training. Recognition from our medical colleagues has also opened up a world of opportunities to train alongside them with regards to diagnostics (e.g. prostate biopsy, ultrasound and flexible cystoscopy certified courses) and follow up in addition to recognition in our own right as bringing new, complimentary skills and experiences to the medical team.

As a new Prostate Cancer Nurse Specialist in 2000, training consisted of consultant led assessment. My training started through a role I obtained at The Prostate Cancer Charity leading a nurse team working on a helpline receiving phone calls from men with prostate cancer, their partners and friends. Telephone consultations can be difficult when the individual is known to you; however this was a baptism of fire. Picking up the telephone without being able to anticipate the questions you may be asked or how to handle the caller at the other end is a challenge in itself. Communication courses now exist for Specialist Nurses and organizations such as The Telephone Helpline Association run more in-depth courses aimed at the medium of telephone consultation. These experiences have helped our team focus on the strength of different mediums of consultation, most recently, e-mail and web based sessions.

My current position was new to the Hospital Trust, at its conception. The vagaries around the role allowed its development to take place...
very naturally. It gave me time to help set up new treatment services for prostate cancer and immerse myself in the governance surrounding these procedures, as High Intensity Focused Ultrasound (HIFU) and Brachytherapy treatments were relatively new to the UK and Europe. My responsibilities now include the provision of a diagnostic service for prostate cancer in the form of a prostate biopsy clinic, specialist advice on symptom control post treatment, psychological support for both patients and their carers and a nurse-led erectile dysfunction service.

I act as an advocate, “key worker” for patients and their families educating them on all treatment options enabling them to make an informed choice. I help them to communicate their wishes to the medical team, together negotiating an agreed pathway of care. I ensure that patient’s physical, psychological, spiritual and cultural needs are assessed in relation to their disease and proposed treatment plan making appropriate referrals to supportive agencies as indicated.

My role within the department includes liaison with our patient focus group that help give input into service development within the unit. A succession of patient days over the last 3 years have ensured that changes made within the department are led by the patients themselves rather than the needs and wants of the clinicians and nurses.

This consultation process has already allowed us to set up a new and innovative role in the shape of a Prostate Cancer Support and Information Nurse Specialist post. This post is a shared post between the hospital and a leading Prostate Cancer Charity. The nurse is able to give unbiased information and support to patients and their families with regards to treatment options for prostate cancer. Over a 6 month period it has become an invaluable part of our service and the patients we treat. Due to the success of this role, other collaborative roles with charities are now being discussed at management level.

The field of prostate cancer is continually breaking new ground and I believe this will provide great opportunities for nurses over the next 10 years. Professional clinical development and a solid education now established within the UK will insure the continuance of a robust training programme for Prostate Cancer Specialist Nurses of the future.

References

Prostate Cancer
A Guide for Nurses
Jan Foubert

1. Both of you are the authors of a book called Guide to prostate carcinoma, published by Elsevier Gezondheidszorg: Please introduce yourselves?

My name is Erik van Muilekom (1965). I hold a Masters in Advanced Nursing Practice and work in the Netherlands Cancer Institute-Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Hospital in Amsterdam. For many years I worked as a Clinical Nurse Specialist in the field of urological, gastro-intestinal and gynaecological surgical oncology. At the present time I work as a project manager in private care with international patients.

My name is Jan Alex van Spil (1961); I too hold a Masters in Advanced Nursing Practice and work as a Nurse Practitioner at the Department of Radiation Oncology of the University Medical Centre Groningen. As a Clinical Nurse Specialist I have gained enormous experience is the field of medical oncology.