

Building a Young Cancer Nurses Network



Young Cancer Nurses

Oncology and cancer nursing is a specialised field for nurses. With a strong focus on cancer diagnosis and treatment, the care of oncology patients is constantly changing and developing. This makes it an exciting and diverse area of nursing to work in. However, it can also be very physically and emotionally demanding, given the complexity of the patient group, the treatments and the nature of the disease. Young Cancer Nurses (YCN) face additional personal and professional challenges that are unique to their generation, as a result of changing political and economic environments globally.

There is an increasing prevalence of YCNs entering the nursing workforce in a specialised area of nursing, such as oncology. Going into oncology as a newly qualified nurse is a huge learning curve. In my personal experience, it takes a long time to fully understand the complexity of this patient group, but, perhaps more crucially, to build up the resilience and strength to work in such an emotive environment. In particular, experiencing the highs and lows of oncology, caring for patients and their families through treatment success or treatment failure, through the huge complexities and difficulties of treatment can be massively taxing.

After almost 10 years in oncology, I still remember that first long-term patient I cared for through the duration of his treatment. After progression through treatment, he was flown back to South Africa to be with his family at the end of his life. A man popular with all the team on the ward, it was a significant moment for everyone. This was the point when I realised that there is a very fine line between showing compassion and caring and becoming too involved. A good nurse shows compassion but is also a source of strength and support for those in need.

Why do we need a network?

The YCN Network has been developed in response to the work of EONS to ensure that oncology nursing is recognised as a specialist nursing role throughout Europe. There are many skills unique to oncology nursing and it is important to promote these and ensure every patient receives care to the same exemplary standard. However, it is evident that

there is inequality between countries with regards to the level of training, the adequacy of the working environment, education and opportunity. Our vision is to provide support and guidance. It is a platform for networking as well as an opportunity to discuss and compare practice, sharing experience and supporting each other. Along with new initiatives, such as the Nightingale Challenge webinar series, our aim is to demonstrate how exciting and rewarding a career in cancer nursing can be and to help develop the next generation of young nurses as leaders, practitioners and advocates in healthcare.

What is so special about the YCN Network?

Our network is a source of support, guidance and education for oncology nurses. It is about making the most of opportunities that present themselves; educational, research, new experiences. At more than 40 strong, I am continually amazed by the drive, the passion and the vision that is so evident in the work of everyone in the network. (This is not an automatic assertion that those who don't fit into the definition of YCN do not possess these same qualities!) As vice-chair of the Network, I am incredibly proud to be a part of the team leading these phenomenal nurses and I am excited to see how much we can change and develop oncology nursing in the years to come.

So why be part of a YCN Network?

It is an opportunity to work with some incredible, talented nurses from around the world. It is a place of passion, drive and dedication. It is an opportunity for experience, education and promotion of the future of nursing and the creativity and ambition of the nursing workforce. Why would you not want to be a part of that?

Find out more on the EONS [YCN webpage](#) and also with your national societies.

[Nightingale Webinar Series 2021](#), commencing 04/10/21.

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