

PRINCESS MARGARET CANCER CENTRE – ONCOLOGY NURSING PRACTICE

Registered Nurses are key members of the health care team and play important roles in Cancer Care including health promotion, cancer prevention and screening, treatment and symptom management in acute, long term, community and palliative care. Oncology nursing is a specialty practice which requires additional knowledge and clinical skills to support patients diagnosed with cancer and their families.

The Princess Margaret Cancer Centre recognizes and supports the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology's vision that there are three nursing roles integral to the cancer system and oncology nursing. They are the generalist, specialized oncology and advanced oncology nurse.

The Generalist Nurse is an individual who is diploma or baccalaureate prepared and works in any one of a variety of general health care settings (emergency departments, community care) with only a percentage of patients having a diagnosis of cancer.

The Specialized Oncology Nurse is a registered nurse with expanded education focused on cancer care and nursing experience focused in a setting where a majority of patients have a diagnosis of cancer. We strive to have all nurses complete the specialized oncology nurse certification exam offered by the Canadian Nurses Association.

The Advanced Oncology Nurse is prepared at the Master's level. At the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) in Oncology may hold the title of Nurse Practitioners (NP), Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) or Nurse Educator (APN-E). These roles have been positioned in the cancer program to influence clinical practice, quality, safety and access to care.

At the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, patients and families have access to a Specialized Oncology Nurse or Advanced Oncology Nurse when they are receiving treatment or undergoing a procedure, in physical/psychological distress, or transitioning from one stage of care to another, for example transition from active treatment to long term follow-up.

The Specialized Oncology Nurses are committed to [seven standards of practice](#):

1. Comprehensive Health Assessment

Assessment is done in a timely and comprehensive way as it relates to the health and supportive care needs of the patient. Patients during treatment and follow up are screened using the Edmonton Symptom Assessment System and Distress Assessment and Response Tool. These tools identify patients in distress and who must be seen by a member of the team.

2. Supportive and Therapeutic Relationships

Specialized Oncology Nurses work at developing a caring and therapeutic relationship that is supportive and sensitive to the culture and patients' needs.

3. Management of Cancer Symptoms and Treatment Side Effects

Specialized Oncology Nurses caring for patients receiving chemotherapy at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre are required to follow the [Standards and Competencies for Cancer Chemotherapy Nursing Practice](#). Specialized Oncology Nurses are also required to meet the provincial standard of completing and maintaining the [Provincial Standardized Chemotherapy and Biotherapy Course](#). Specialized Oncology Nurses caring for patients receiving radiation treatment at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre acquire and maintain standards and competencies as outlined in [CANO/ACIO Radiation Oncology Nursing Practice Standards and Competencies](#). The Specialized Oncology Nurse uses evidence-based guidelines to assess and manage common symptoms and side effects. Some of the common symptoms include pain, shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, change in bowel habits, mucositis, anxiety, fatigue and depression.

Symptom Management Guides are highlighted and available on the Cancer Care Ontario website. This includes algorithms and practice guides for: Pain, Dyspnea, Nausea & Vomiting, Delirium, Loss of Appetite, Bowel Care, Oral Care, Anxiety,* Fatigue,* Depression.*

<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management>

* Developed by the Cancer Journey Advisory Group and the Canadian Association of Psychosocial Oncology, with support from the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, in collaboration with the Ontario Cancer Symptom Management Collaborative.

4. Teaching and Coaching

The Specialized Oncology Nurse provides individual teaching and supportive counseling during their cancer experience.

5. Facilitating Continuity of Care/Navigating the System

The Specialized Oncology Nurse navigates the patient across care settings and between health care providers.

6. Decision Making and Advocacy

The Specialized Oncology Nurse in collaboration with the health care team facilitates self-determination and informed decision making. In addition, the Specialized Oncology Nurse advocates on behalf of the patient communicating their preferred approach to care.

7. Professional Practice and Leadership

The Specialized Oncology Nurse engages in critical thinking and best practices and advocates for change when necessary.

CANO/ACIO – Canadian Association of Oncology Nursing / Association canadienne des infirmières en oncologie <http://www.cano-acio.org>

CCO – Cancer Care Ontario <https://www.cancercareontario.ca>