

Career Pathway and Education Framework for Cancer Nursing: higher education toolkit

CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE



This publication is endorsed by:

Acknowledgements

Professor Vanessa Taylor (Chair)

Deputy Head of School (Nursing) (Students and Teaching)

Chair in Learning, Teaching & Professional Practice (Cancer & Palliative Care)

University of Central Lancashire

Members of Steering Group (2021)

RCN Cancer and Breast Care Forum

RCN/CCLG Children and Young People Cancer Nurses Community (CYPCN)

UKONS Board

North-west Cancer Alliances (Greater Manchester Cancer Alliance, Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance, Lancashire and South Cumbria Cancer Alliance)

Skills for Health

Contributors:

Jeanette Hawkins, Chief Nurse, Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group

Dr Rebecca Verity, Director, The Royal Marsden School

Critical reviewers:

Professor Alison Leary, Chair in Healthcare and Workforce Modelling, London South Bank University

Wendy Preston, Head of Nursing Practice RCN, Honorary Consultant Nurse (Warwickshire)

Ofray Muflahi, RCN Professional Lead – Nursing Support Workers & Long-Term Conditions

Members of the Steering Group (2017)

Ms Maria Noblet, Past Chair of RCN Cancer and Breast Care Forum

Mr Richard Henry, President UK Oncology Nursing Society

Ms Rachel Hollis, Chair of RCN Children and Young People – Specialist Care Forum

Ms Samantha Smith, Head of Nursing and Clinical Services Teenage Cancer Trust

Contributors:

UKONS Board

Dr Catherine Wilson, Head of The Royal Marsden School

Professor Sara Faithfull, Professor of Cancer Nursing Practice, University of Surrey

Special thanks to:

Mrs Gillian Knight, Macmillan Lead Cancer Nurse, South Wales Cancer Network

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Published by the Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London, W1G 0RN

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Guidance for:

- pre-registration nursing students
- nursing support/support workers providing care to people affected by cancer in general settings and to adults in specialist cancer services
- registered nursing associates providing care to people affected by cancer in general settings and to adults in specialist cancer services
- registered nurses providing care to people affected by cancer in general settings
- registered nurses providing care to adults affected by cancer in specialist cancer services.

Mapping template for higher education institutions and clinical education providers

The mapping template has been developed to:

- inform curriculum development
- facilitate assessment of, and demonstrate the extent to which, programmes of learning for pre-registration nursing students enable students to achieve the cancer-specific nursing outcomes at the point of registration
- facilitate assessment of, and demonstrate the extent to which, CPD opportunities and accredited programmes (at undergraduate and postgraduate levels) enable registered nurses to meet the cancer-specific nursing outcomes
- facilitate collaborative working between education providers, employers, service providers and commissioners to promote learning opportunities which enable support workers, registered nursing associates and registered nurses to meet the cancer-specific nursing outcomes.

Table 1: Colour coding

Practitioner level key:

	Pre-registration nursing student (working under supervision)
	Nursing support worker/support workers providing care to PABC across all ages in general/non-specialist settings and to adults in specialist cancer services
	Registered nursing associates providing care to PABC across all ages in general/non-specialist settings and to adults in specialist cancer services
	Registered nurses at all levels providing care to PABC across all ages in general/non-specialist settings
	Registered nurses at registration providing care to adults in specialist cancer services/roles
	Registered nurses at enhanced level providing care to adults in specialist cancer services/roles
	Registered nurses at advanced level providing care to adults in specialist cancer services/roles
	Registered nurses at consultant level providing care to adults in specialist cancer services/roles

Mapping template for higher education institutions and in-service education providers

1.0 Risk reduction, early detection and health promotion in cancer care Epidemiology plays a pivotal role in cancer risk reduction and control by describing the distribution of cancer and discovering risk factors, shaping the development of cancer services nationally and internationally.	Practitioner level (see key) Tick level of achievement required								Evidence of achievement (tick relevant programme) UG or PG Pre-registration nursing programme Fd Nursing Associate programme PG Post-registration module/course
Learning outcomes: practitioners will be able to:									
1.1 Describe the epidemiology of cancer									
1.2 Examine the modifiable and non-modifiable determinants of cancer									
1.3 Describe risk reduction strategies, genetic screening for cancer and appropriate health promotion strategies									
1.4 Examine current cancer screening strategies									
1.5 Identify the signs and symptoms of the most common cancers and explain the concept of early detection									
1.6 Evaluate the nurse’s role with reference to risk reduction and early detection in the context of cancer									
Practice competencies: practitioners will be able to:									
1.7 Describe the occurrence and distribution of the most common cancers with a focus on Europe and nurses’ own country									
1.8 Undertake a comprehensive history to identify the individual, familial, genetic, sociocultural, economic and environmental factors which may increase the risk for developing cancer									
1.9 Identify and explain the multifactorial causes of cancer to PABC									
1.10 Provide evidence-based verbal and written information regarding lifestyle related, surgical and chemoprevention risk-reducing strategies for cancer which is appropriate and individualised to PABC									
1.11 Provide evidence-based verbal and written information regarding genetic screening for cancer which is appropriate and individualised to PABC									
1.12 Provide appropriate and individualised evidence based verbal and written information regarding the benefits and risks of screening for cancer to PABC									
1.13 Guided by appropriate health promotion theories/health belief models, provide evidence based verbal and written information regarding early signs and symptoms of common cancers and when and who to contact at the onset of symptoms									
1.14 Demonstrate use of a range of effective communication skills/strategies to provide information, psychological and emotional support to individuals and communities about cancer, the risk of developing cancer and strategies to reduce risk, including the value of engagement in screening programmes for early detection.									
1.15 Encourage individuals and family members to utilise appropriate local, national and/ or international cancer organisations for further information, psychosocial support and/or financial support									

2.0 Cancer pathophysiology and the principles of treatment decision-making Understanding the biological processes that contribute to the development of cancer and the rationale for diagnostic and staging process, and local and systemic treatments for PABC.	Practitioner level (see key) Tick level of achievement required								Evidence of achievement (tick relevant programme) UG or PG Pre-registration nursing programme Fd Nursing Associate programme PG Post-registration module/course
Learning outcomes: practitioners will be able to:									
2.1 Describe the biological processes which lead to the development of cancer									
2.2 Describe the range of diagnostic and staging approaches used to establish a cancer diagnosis, the extent of the disease and prognosis									
2.3 Analyse the nursing role in supporting PABC during the diagnostic and staging process for cancer particularly in the context of their age-appropriate informational, physical, emotional and social care needs, where relevant									
2.4 Discuss the different issues which need to be considered in order to support and facilitate patients' decision-making in the context of localised, locally advanced or metastatic disease									
Practice competencies: practitioners will be able to:									
2.5 Provide PABC with evidence-based verbal and written information about the development of cancer with a view to addressing their informational and supportive care needs									
2.6 Support PABC through the diagnosis and staging process. Undertake initial and ongoing comprehensive assessments (using validated tools where appropriate) to identify PABC's informational, physical, emotional and social care needs (where relevant) during the diagnostic and staging process									
2.7 Undertake a comprehensive history to identify factors in addition to the cancer stage and grade which are important for optimal outcomes related to treatment decision making (eg performance status, comorbidities, medications, psychological and social factors, patient's care and treatment preferences)									
2.8 Provide a supportive environment where PABC are encouraged to share their concerns and to express their preferences regarding the decisions made about their treatment									
2.9 Encourage PABC to utilise appropriate local, national and/or international cancer organisations for further information, psychosocial, spiritual and/or financial support									

3.0 Investigation and diagnosis Using evidence-based thinking and decision-making processes, use and interpretation of diagnostic skills, understanding of cognitive biases, human factors, patient-centred evidence-based care/practice, diagnostic error, sound clinical reasoning, patient safety and quality of care.	Practitioner level (see key) Tick level of achievement required								Evidence of achievement (tick relevant programme) UG or PG Pre-registration nursing programme Fd Nursing Associate programme PG Post-registration module/course
Learning outcomes: practitioners will be able to:									
3.1 Demonstrate knowledge of range of clinical decision making and consultation models									
3.2 Analyse the key sources of information required to undertake a general and focused history to elicit and assess an individual's needs									
3.3 Explain the use and interpretation of diagnostic tests and investigations									
3.4 Analyse clinical reasoning processes demonstrating understanding of cognitive bias, human factors, and diagnostic error									
3.5 Use relevant evidence to inform clinical decision-making promoting patient safety and quality of care									
Practice competencies: practitioners will be able to:									
3.6 Apply a range of consultation models appropriate to the clinical situation and across a range of physical, psychological and social presentations									
3.7 Undertake general history taking and focused history taking to elicit and assess an individual's needs									
3.8 Synthesise information, taking account of factors which may include the presenting complaint, existing complaints, past medical history, genetic predisposition, medication, allergies, risk factors and other determinants of health to establish differential diagnosis									
3.9 Incorporate information on the nature of the person's needs, preferences and priorities from various other appropriate sources eg third parties, previous histories and investigations									
3.10 Critically appraise complex, incomplete, ambiguous and conflicting information gathered from history taking and/or examination, distilling and synthesising key factors from the appraisal, and identifying those elements that may need to be pursued further									
3.11 Target a range of investigations appropriately and efficiently following due process with an understanding of respective validity, reliability, specificity and sensitivity and the implications of these limitations									
3.12 Understand the importance of, and implications of findings and results and take appropriate action. This may be urgent referral/escalation as in life threatening situations, or further investigation, treatment or referral									
3.13 Be confident in, and take responsibility for, own decisions whilst being able to recognise when a clinical situation is beyond own capability or competence and escalate appropriately									
3.14 Formulate a differential diagnosis based on subjective and, where available, objective data									
3.15 Exercise clinical judgement and select the most likely diagnosis in relation to all information obtained. These may include the use of time as a diagnostic tool where appropriate									

3.16 Make a diagnosis in a structured way using a problem-solving method informed by an understanding of probability based on prevalence, incidence and natural history of illness to aid decision-making								
3.17 Synthesise the expertise of multi-professional teams to aid in diagnosis where needed								
3.18 Deliver diagnosis and test/investigation results (including difficult news sensitively and appropriately in line with local and/or national guidance, using different medium and formats including spoken word, diagrams, technology to ensure that the person has understanding about what has been communicated and can contribute to decision-making about their care								
3.19 Revise hypotheses in the light of additional information and think flexibly around problems, developing appropriate, individualised, person-centred and safe solutions								
3.20 Recognise when information/data may be incomplete and take mitigating actions to manage risk appropriately								

4.0 Cancer treatment, patient and occupational safety Understanding the safe delivery and management of therapies used to treat cancer and the appropriate assessment and management of treatment-related adverse effects. Providing relevant and timely information to enable PABC to engage in clinical decision-making about their treatment and care.	Practitioner level (see key) Tick level of achievement required								Evidence of achievement (tick relevant programme) UG or PG Pre-registration nursing programme Fd Nursing Associate programme PG Post-registration module/course
Learning outcomes: practitioners will be able to:									
4.1 Describe the principles of local and systemic cancer treatments and demonstrate understanding of the different treatment modalities									
4.2 Identify acute, chronic and late toxicities of cancer treatments									
4.3 Identify the evidence to reduce the risk of and/or manage the acute, chronic and late toxicities of cancer treatments									
4.4 Describe and demonstrate how cancer treatments are delivered safely and effectively									
4.5 Explain the range of support required and available to PABC throughout treatment									
4.6 Explain treatment-related emergencies and the signs/symptoms experienced by PABC									
Practice competencies: practitioners will be able to:									
4.7 Provide information in a range of formats and explain to PABC at an appropriate level and pace, the range of cancer treatments available to facilitate patient's involvement in clinical decision-making about their treatment, care and management									
4.8 Provide a supportive environment in which PABC are encouraged to ask questions and share their concerns about their disease and treatment									
4.9 Advocate for and promote PABC involvement in decision-making about treatment, care and management									
4.10 Educate PABC to monitor for and report signs of acute, chronic and late toxicities of cancer treatments									
4.11 Use evidence-based interventions to assess, prevent and manage treatment toxicities									
4.12 Know when to refer to and involve other health care providers									
4.13 Be involved in the delivery of treatment within their scope of practice and requirements of the health care setting									
4.14 Provide continuity and help co-ordinate PABC's care during treatment and document this									
4.15 Educate PABC regarding the practical skills required for effective treatment and self-care interventions where relevant									
4.16 Recognise the hazards associated with cancer treatments and take preventative actions to minimise these and comply with local and national safety regulations, legislations and guidelines									
4.17 Provide information and support to, and act as a role model for colleagues to ensure safe practice in the treatment settings									
4.18 Use evidence-based interventions to assess, prevent and assist in the management of emergencies caused by cancer therapies knowing when to refer to, and involve, other health care providers									

5.0 Supporting people living with, through and beyond cancer Providing care and support to PABC throughout the cancer trajectory.	Practitioner level (see key) Tick level of achievement required								Evidence of achievement (tick relevant programme) UG or PG Pre-registration nursing programme Fd Nursing Associate programme PG Post-registration module/course
Learning outcomes: practitioners will be able to:									
5.1 Identify the impact of cancer on the physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing of people affected by cancer (PABC)									
5.2 Describe the complex and changing informational, educational and supportive care needs of PABC									
5.3 Describe theories of self-management and self-empowerment as well as lifestyle interventions for improving quality of life									
5.4 Examine the potential impact of co-morbidities and the consequences of long-term and late effects of cancer treatment									
5.5 Recognise the importance of smooth transitions such as between acute health care settings and home care, from active treatment to survival programmes, or from paediatric to adult cancer services									
5.6 Demonstrate insight into the emotional labour involved when caring for PABC throughout the spectrum of cancer care and evaluate reasons why care of the self and colleagues is important									
Practice competencies: practitioners will be able to:									
5.7 Use evidence-based interventions to assess, prevent and manage the physical, psychological, social and existential consequences of cancer									
5.8 Develop an individualised care plan in collaboration with PABC tailored to the phase of disease (eg diagnosis, during treatment, post-treatment, ie survivorship and rehabilitation)									
5.9 Involve specialist palliative support care services where appropriate									
5.10 know when to refer to, and involve members of the multi-professional team to deliver holistic patient centred care									
5.11 identify and utilise appropriate informational, educational and supportive care interventions aligned to PABC's needs and life stage at different phases of the disease									
5.12 Demonstrate awareness of the range of services and professionals, including statutory, voluntary and charitable organisations, available to support PABC and refer appropriately to meet the individual needs of PABC									
5.13 Provide information to PABC to promote and support self-care and self-management and enable independence									
5.14 Consider the needs of younger and older patients who may not have independence to make decisions for themselves									
5.15 Signpost PABC to other sources of support									
5.16 Identify individuals who are at high risk of long-term and late effects, including risk of secondary cancer									

5.17 Appropriately consider co-morbidity, the impact of long-term illness and survivorship on the health status and well-being of PABC and implement appropriate referrals to other professionals and agencies in respect of these									
5.18 Deliver supportive care to manage cancer co-morbidities and other diseases (eg COPD and diabetes)									
5.19 Act to support effective continuity of care and seamless transitions between different health care services, from active treatment through to survivorship (long term follow-up) and/or palliative and end of life care									
5.20 Seek emotional and developmental support when required									
5.21 Actively support colleagues									
5.22 Act as a role model									

6.0 Caring for people with advanced disease and at end of life Providing a high standard of palliative and supportive care to those living with advanced cancer to meet multiple and complex physical, practical, psychosocial, emotional and spiritual needs at end of life.	Practitioner level (see key) Tick level of achievement required								Evidence of achievement (tick relevant programme) UG or PG Pre-registration nursing programme Fd Nursing Associate programme PG Post-registration module/course
Learning outcomes: practitioners will be able to:									
6.1 Explain how the philosophy and principles of palliative care and end of life care are implemented in own care setting eg supportive care, palliative care and end of life care									
6.2 Describe the important role of palliative care throughout the disease trajectory									
6.3 Identify the physical, psychological, social, emotional and existential impact of advanced cancer									
6.4 Describe the signs of dying and distinguish between reversible treatable symptoms and those which indicate the final phase of life									
6.5 Define the goals of care when a person is dying eg patient comfort and dignity, symptom management, family and caregiver support									
6.6 Explore theories of loss, grief and bereavement and how these are applied in clinical practice									
Practice competencies: practitioners will be able to:									
6.7 Recognise that palliative care is the responsibility of all cancer care professionals regardless of health care setting									
6.8 Identify the barriers to integrating palliative care and act to address them									
6.9 Inform, support and educate PABC about palliative and end of life care where appropriate									
6.10 Demonstrate an open attitude towards and act as an advocate for palliative care									
6.11 Raise awareness and educate colleagues about palliative care									
6.12 Recognise the importance of effective continuity of care and seamless transitions between different health care services, from active treatment through to end of life									
6.13 Facilitate appropriate discussions between health and social care professionals, patients and their family members to elicit their preferences with respect to goals of care and the transition between care aimed at cure and end of life care									
6.14 Undertake a holistic assessment of the needs, concerns and symptoms commonly experienced by PABC receiving palliative and/or end of life care									
6.15 Identify and deliver evidence-informed nursing interventions to support patients and carers									
6.16 Demonstrate ability to advocate for vulnerable people with advanced disease and those close to them, representing and advocating for wishes on behalf of person or their family, navigating ethical and legally challenging situations									
6.17 Recognise the final phase of life									
6.18 Communicate sensitively, truthfully and without ambiguity about the dying process with PABC									

6.19 Deliver appropriate interventions to guide and support PABC and their carers through the dying process involving and knowing when to refer onto other health care providers									
6.20 Provide appropriate nursing interventions to promote patient comfort and dignity									
6.21 Respect and respond to different cultural and religious perspectives/needs at EOL									
6.22 Identify the need and implement strategies for involving and supporting the family and carers									
6.23 Use active listening and observation skills to recognise, assess and appropriately support a person experiencing distress									
6.24 Support and give advice to families and carers following death knowing when to refer and involve other health care providers									

7.0 Independent and supplementary prescribing Apply knowledge of pharmacology, pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics to safely prescribe within own scope of practice demonstrating evidence-based thinking and decision-making processes and sound clinical reasoning within legal frameworks for prescribing for patient safety and quality of care.	Practitioner level (see key) Tick level of achievement required								Evidence of achievement (tick relevant programme) UG or PG Pre-registration nursing programme Fd Nursing Associate programme PG Post-registration module/course
Learning outcomes: practitioners will be able to:									
7.1 Demonstrate knowledge of pharmacology, pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics related to medications relevant and appropriate to their scope of practice									
7.2 Demonstrate knowledge of legal frameworks and guidelines for prescribing including the Royal Pharmaceutical Framework									
7.3 Use relevant evidence to inform clinical decision-making and prescribing medications promoting patient safety and quality of care									
Practice competencies: practitioners will be able to:									
7.4 Safely prescribe therapeutic medications, relevant and appropriate to scope of practice applying an in-depth understanding of pharmacology which considers relevant physiological and/or pathophysiological changes and allergies									
7.5 Critically analyse polypharmacy, evaluating the pharmacological interactions and the impact upon physical and psychological well-being and health care provision									
7.6 Keep up to date and apply the principles of evidence-based practice, including clinical and cost-effectiveness and associated legal frameworks for prescribing									
7.7 Follow Royal Pharmaceutical Framework									
7.8 Appropriately review response to medication, recognising the balance of risks and benefits which may occur									
7.9 Take account of context including what matters to the person and their experience and impact for them, including preferences in the context of their life including polypharmacy, multimorbidity, frailty, existing medical issues (for example kidney or liver issues and cognitive impairment)									
7.10 Confidently explain and discuss risks and benefits of medication with people using appropriate language, education and tools to assist as needed									
7.11 Advise people on medicines management, including concordance and the expected benefits and limitation, informing them impartially in the advantages and disadvantages in the context of other management options									
7.12 Support people to take the medications they require and deprescribe where appropriate									

8.0 Communication in cancer care Providing effective person-centred communication to determine patients and carers needs, concerns and preferences, and patients' satisfaction, adherence to treatment, safety, improved outcomes and recovery.	Practitioner level (see key) Tick level of achievement required								Evidence of achievement (tick relevant programme) UG or PG Pre-registration nursing programme Fd Nursing Associate programme PG Post-registration module/course
Learning outcomes: practitioners will be able to:									
8.1 Discuss the importance of effective person-centred care communication in the cancer setting in particular									
8.2 Demonstrate knowledge of communication theories and how they are applied in practice, including strategies for conducting assessments									
8.3 Describe the barriers to, and facilitators of effective communication when interacting with PABC									
8.4 Explore the importance of multi-professional communication in cancer care and how this can be enhanced									
8.5 Identify supportive strategies which will help cancer nurses to develop emotional resilience									
Practice competencies: practitioners will be able to:									
8.6 Effectively utilise verbal, written and digital modes of communication to provide information, education and support in an empathic, clear understandable and caring manner while maintaining confidentiality									
8.7 Select and adopt an appropriate communication approach, from a range of core communication and consultation skills, to effectively assess the informational, educational and supportive care needs of PABC throughout the cancer trajectory									
8.8 Assess for and address any patient-related, nurse-related or environmental barriers to effective communication									
8.9 Appropriately select from a range of communication skills and style available in order to promote clear and unambiguous information exchanges with other health professionals									
8.10 Demonstrate effective advanced communication and interpersonal skills with people affected by cancer, those close to them and colleagues across all care settings									
8.11 Demonstrate the ability to facilitate effective communication across teams (using a variety of formats), care settings and services to support the multi-professional, multi-agency team to provide holistic person-centred, co-ordinated care for people affected by cancer									
8.12 Demonstrate emotional literacy, reflective ability, appropriate empathy and social competences									
8.13 Act as a role model for others for communication in cancer care									
8.14 Recognise own emotional needs and act accordingly using help seeking behaviour to prevent burnout									

9.0 Leadership and management in cancer nursing Regardless of role or position, developing practitioners with leadership skills to facilitate team management and to organise work and practice development for PABC.	Practitioner level (see key) Tick level of achievement required								Evidence of achievement (tick relevant programme) UG or PG Pre-registration nursing programme Fd Nursing Associate programme PG Post-registration module/course
Learning outcomes: practitioners will be able to:									
9.1 Differentiate between leadership and management and consider how different models of clinical leadership may impact on the care provided to PABC									
9.2 Describe the importance of the legal, ethical and professional issues in relation to the care of PABC									
9.3 Describe the principles of risk assessment and management in relation to the care of PABC									
9.4 Discuss the importance of self-development and emotional resilience for cancer nurses									
9.5 Discuss the importance of relevant resource management strategies in relation to cancer care									
Practice competencies: practitioners will be able to:									
9.6 Use appropriate leadership and management strategies to practice and evaluate the impact of these strategies upon PABC and on other health care professionals									
9.7 Practice in accordance with legal, ethical and professional principles in order to provide safe, effective, timely, cost-effective care to PABC									
9.8 Practice in accordance with national and local policies and standards in order to provide safe, effective, timely, cost-effective care to PABC									
9.9 Provide leadership in the contribution to and implementation and evaluation of policies and standards relevant to cancer care									
9.10 Assess risk and implement risk management strategies in order to promote patient well-being and safety in practice									
9.11 Demonstrate evidence of continuing professional development and actively promote the professional development of nurses working in other areas of the organisation									
9.12 Demonstrate the ability to plan, allocate, co-ordinate and evaluate the use of health care resources in an appropriate manner when providing care to PABC									
9.13 Inform the strategic direction and lead changes to cancer service delivery for a population/community									

10.0 Research utilisation and evidence in cancer care Developing literature searching, retrieval, and critical appraisal of research, alongside developing an understanding of the research process and different methodologies to facilitate research utilisation, initiate quality assurance/service improvement processes and implementation of evidence-based care.	Practitioner level (see key) Tick level of achievement required								Evidence of achievement (tick relevant programme) UG or PG Pre-registration nursing programme Fd Nursing Associate programme PG Post-registration module/course
Learning outcomes: practitioners will be able to:									
10.1 Explain how knowledge and evidence are developed for clinical practice									
10.2 Identify the key sources of research and evidence-based clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) relevant to cancer care and cancer nursing									
10.3 Critically appraise peer-reviewed research articles and CPGs relevant to cancer care and cancer nursing									
10.4 Describe the principles of cancer clinical trials and discuss the role of the nurse in this context									
10.5 Describe the use of health services research in cancer service development and explore the role of clinical audit in practice development									
Practice competencies: practitioners will be able to:									
10.6 Demonstrate the ability to provide an evidence-based rationale for interventions in cancer care in general and in cancer nursing in particular									
10.7 Retrieve high quality research articles and evidence-based guidelines relevant to cancer care and cancer nursing by formulating effective research questions and utilising effective search strategies for sourcing relevant electronic and print material									
10.8 Appropriately apply evidence-based recommendations in the clinical area having considered the strengths and limitations of the research									
10.9 Provide safe and effective care to patients on clinical trials in accordance with study protocols with a view to ensuring optimal outcomes and experiences for patients									
10.10 Describe and contribute to health services research and clinical audit in their clinical area									
10.11 Use knowledge of research and audit process, and methods to develop and lead projects for practice and service development for cancer nursing									

RCN quality assurance

Publication

This is an RCN advice and information publication. Guidance on how to search and find the relevant evidence-based information and resources you may require to help keep your knowledge and practice up-to-date.

Description

The RCN's Career and Education Framework for Cancer Nursing for UK nursing staff incorporates cancer-specific nursing outcomes. The Framework and outcomes are intended to be used as part of professional, education and workforce development to support improvements in the delivery of high-quality care to people affected by cancer.

Publication date: March 2022 Review date: March 2025

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Evaluation

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www.rcn.org.uk/direct
0345 772 6100

Published by the Royal College of Nursing
20 Cavendish Square
London
W1G 0RN

020 7409 3333
www.rcn.org.uk

March 2022
Review date: March 2025
Publication code: 010 125

