



Picture 1. Graduates from cohort 1.

Abstract

The acute oncology speciality covers the management of patients who develop symptoms as a consequence of cancer, cancer treatment, or a newly diagnosed cancer. The 'NHS Fife Acute Oncology' module binds together all aspects of this sub speciality.

The development of this module was led by the Lead Cancer Nurse with the support of the Practice Development Facilitator and NES Practice Educator. The curriculum was developed and delivered by a work-based continuing professional development (CPD) module, supported by the palliative care cancer education team and the medical and clinical oncologists.

The purpose of this module was to facilitate the development of clinical decision making and critical thinking skills required to manage the acute episode of patients with cancer-related symptoms and equip registered nurses to develop their existing knowledge to care for these patients. The overall aim was to improve the quality of care provided and improve the patient experience.

This module is unique, it utilises a variety of blended learning methods, such as a Community of Practice, to explore clinical issues and develop evidence-based practice. Participants attended 3 face to face days over 10 weeks and were supported throughout by a clinical supervisor. They were assessed by submitting a written reflection on their practice. They also presented what they had learned or changed as a result of this module to their peers and the senior nursing team.

The development of this acute oncology module was a learning curve for everyone involved due to the complexity of the patient group and the challenges of work-based learning. The impact on practice was evaluated through questionnaires and focus groups. Overall the module was very well evaluated and achieved its aim to improve the care of patients with cancer-related symptoms, which was demonstrated through the changes in practice evidenced by the participants.

Introduction

A need was identified to develop and deliver formal Continuing Professional Development (CPD) education to support Registered Nurses working within NHS Fife acute hospitals to care for patients under the collective sub-speciality of 'Acute Oncology'.

Educational Content

The innovativeness of this module was the use of an electronic NHS Education for Scotland 'Acute Oncology Community of Practice' which saw collaboration across multiple organisations with patient priorities at the centre of this. The Community of Practice influenced the success of this module as it integrated policy and frontline practice (Picture 2).



Picture 2. Community of Practice

The aim was to facilitate development of clinical decision making and critical thinking skills required to manage the acute episode of patients with cancer-related symptoms. The course utilised a variety of case scenarios with supporting theory, to enhance and develop practitioners' existing knowledge to assess newly diagnosed cancers, Systemic Anti Cancer Treatments (SACT) and disease progression.

Topics Included:

- Assessment skills
- Breaking bad news
- Cancer of an unknown primary (CUP)
- Pain management

Completion of the MacMillan Learnzone Acute Oncology eLearning module was also encouraged and practitioners found this 'invaluable'.

Learning Outcomes

The aim was for the following learning outcomes to be achieved on successful completion of the module :

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of acute oncology in relation to clinical practice, facilitation of learning, leadership and evidence, research and development.
2. Demonstrate the ability to appropriately assess and plan care for acute oncology patients.
3. Use critical thinking to explore and analyse case studies and situations in clinical practice in relation to acute oncology.
4. Apply clinical decision making in relation to acute oncology.

Evaluation & Impact

The module was evaluated using quantitative and qualitative methods. Feedback after each session was formally sought, then a final module questionnaire completed and focus group held. (see Table 1 & Figure 1). An additional value reported by students was the ability to use this module to support requirements for CPD as part of NMC revalidation.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
1. The module was relevant to my clinical practice	77.8%	22.2%	0
2. The module challenged me to develop my thinking	77.8%	22.2%	0
3. The Community of Practice was helpful to my learning	44.4%	55.6%	0
4. The UKONS Module was helpful to my learning	88.9%	11.1%	0
5. Completing the assessments stimulated my learning and developed my skills and knowledge	66.7%	33.3%	0
6. The speakers were knowledgeable and delivered high quality sessions	88.9%	11.1%	0

Figure 1. Quotes from students

"I will consider not just patients but the families when dealing with acute oncology and will use this learning to relieve fears and point them in the right direction"

Student A

"I loved the networking opportunities I got and the range of people on the course - this was one of the biggest benefits, sharing experiences, thoughts and feelings"

Student B

Conclusion

The module is well evaluated and the next cohort is about to commence. The module content continues to evolve in line with contemporary reports and the establishment of an Acute Oncology Service in NHS Fife. This module offers students the opportunity to progress their academic education through independent study linked to work based learning.

This module supports exploration of clinical practice through a series of blended learning sessions whilst developing the knowledge, skills and attributes which underpin safe, effective, person-centred care. Enabling students to critically reflect on the care given to acute oncology patients in their clinical areas, resulting in the development of improved clinical decision making and clinical judgement skills.

Contact

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