

Standardizing Chemotherapy Education to Improve Patient Satisfaction at an Ambulatory Oncology Center

Lindsay Muratore, DNP, FNP-BC, OCN®, Carla S. Aquino, DNP, RN, and Teresa Reimer, MSN, FNP-BC™

This quality improvement project implemented a standardized chemotherapy class for newly diagnosed patients receiving oncology care at an urban ambulatory oncology center. Results showed high scores on patient satisfaction questions derived from the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Cancer Care Survey, increased scores postimplementation on three patient satisfaction measures from data sourced from Press Ganey, and positive nurse satisfaction feedback.

AT A GLANCE

- Patients receiving oncology care who are effectively educated about their treatment plan are more likely to initiate self-care regimens and have a more positive overall experience.
- Standardization of oncology education can eliminate the risk of educating patients using outdated recommendations, which could potentially improve their cancer trajectory.
- Oncology nursing staff and patients reported that education resources from NCODA are effective, useful, and easy to understand.

KEYWORDS

patient education; quality improvement; staff education; chemotherapy

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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In 2020, about 1.6 million new cases of cancer were reported, and more than one-third of those people died from their cancer (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). Newly diagnosed patients with cancer experience many emotions, with two of the most significant being confusion and fear (National Cancer Institute, 2023). Receiving effective education about the diagnosis and treatment of their cancer reduces anxiety, provides a sense of control, and creates realistic expectations (Arunachalam et al., 2021; Jivraj et al., 2018; Mann, 2011). To date, there is limited standardization for educating patients about their disease and treatment (Gallegos et al., 2019; Lovell et al., 2014). The education presented to patients varies from clinic to clinic (Gallegos et al., 2019), which increases the risk that clinics educate patients using outdated recommendations (Arunachalam et al., 2021; Gallegos et al., 2019). This lack of updated patient education materials in the clinic setting may lead to poor management of side effects, lower rates of patient self-efficacy, mismanagement of patient care, and lack of timely treatment (Arunachalam et al., 2021; Gallegos et al., 2019; Jivraj et al., 2018). Professional oncology organizations provide access to relevant, updated information, which clinics can use to update their educational practices (Arunachalam et al., 2021; Jivraj et al., 2018).

Background

Evidence suggests that when patients are adequately prepared to manage the prominent side effects of chemotherapy, and when patients begin self-care practices sooner, they fare better than patients without this preparation (Altin & Stock, 2016; Apor et al., 2018; Zuk & Quinn, 2002). To further personalize and streamline care for patients receiving oncology treatment, an assessment of patients' needs and baseline understanding may better guide the chemotherapy education process (Apor et al., 2018; Dalby et al., 2013; Parker et al., 2018). Multiple studies support personalizing and tailoring education to the patient's needs (Apor et al., 2018; Chua et al., 2018; Dalby et al., 2013; Gallegos et al., 2019; Mann, 2011; Parker et al., 2018). Patients have different methods of learning new information; some like to search the internet, some are unable or find it difficult to read information and prefer images, and others prefer a conversational or storytelling approach (Chua et al., 2018; Gallegos et al., 2019). The complexities of cancer care and