

## I. Scope of Practice for the Registered Nurse

### A. Professional nursing practice

1. Professional nursing practice is defined and regulated at four levels (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2015).
  - a) Practice is defined nationally through the scopes and standards of practice, codes of ethics, and specialty certifications.
  - b) States regulate practice through boards of nursing and nurse practice acts.
  - c) Institutions outline policies and procedures.
  - d) Nurses are individually licensed and, consequently, are responsible for their individual decisions and actions.
2. The third edition of *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice* (ANA, 2015) refined the definition of *nursing* and maintained existing language referring to “protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities,” as well as the nurse’s role in prevention, facilitation of healing, alleviation of suffering, and advocacy for patients and families (Bowe et al., 2017).
3. The concepts in the ANA definition are foundations of basic nursing practice and generalizable to all areas of practice. Completion of an approved nursing education program may be in a diploma, associate degree (United States), or baccalaureate curriculum. Licensure to practice after successful testing grants legal sanction to practice to the new nurse.

### B. Radiation nursing specialty

1. The radiation oncology nurse is a professional RN who functions independently and interdependently with the radiation oncology team to provide quality patient care (Altman, Butler, & Shern, 2016).
  - a) Nurses provide clinical care, education, psychosocial support, and consultation.
  - b) Radiation oncology nurses may participate in the leadership roles of clinician, educator, administrative manager, consultant, or researcher.
  - c) Radiation oncology nurses provide evidence-based practice throughout the trajectory of care with assessments, symptom management, outcome identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation.
  - d) Nurses also provide support to patients and families during new patient visits, active radiation therapy (RT), and weekly review clinics, in nurse-led radiation support clinics, and through long-term follow-up.
2. Radiation oncology nursing is a complex specialty requiring an overall, basic understanding of the pathophysiology of cancer and its treatment.
  - a) Radiation oncology specialty education provides an understanding of RT as a local cancer treatment. Providing informed and competent holistic care to

patients with cancer and their families requires an interest and commitment to lifelong learning.

- b) Radiation oncology nursing practice is based on philosophical tenets identified by the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) in *Oncology Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice* (Lubejko & Wilson, 2019).
  - c) Specialty nursing practice in oncology, specifically radiation oncology nursing, requires specialized knowledge and critical thinking skills to make independent patient care decisions within a nurse’s scope of practice beyond basic nursing education (prelicensure programs).
  - d) Specialized training and education provided by the employing institution during a designated orientation period and supporting attendance at continuing professional educational programs provide opportunities to develop new knowledge and advanced critical thinking skills. ONS provides diverse levels of educational opportunities to learn about radiation oncology, ranging from basic science and novice clinical skills to advanced concepts of complex concurrent systemic therapy during RT.
  - e) As professional nurses gain experience over time, novice skills develop into expert practice skills. Additionally, interprofessional oncology workforce training for team-based cancer care and education, as well as oncology certification, is desirable to provide competent quality care for the radiation oncology patient population (Ferrell, McCabe, & Levit, 2013; ONS, 2016).
3. Standards of care refer to professional nursing activities that radiation oncology nurses demonstrate through the use of the nursing process.
    - a) The nursing process is the foundation of clinical decision-making and encompasses all significant action taken by nurses within the scope of practice of their licensure, providing care to patients and families (Lubejko & Wilson, 2019).
    - b) The Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology (2018) developed *Radiation Oncology Nursing Practice Standards and Competencies* based on the vision that all patients, regardless of geography, receiving radiation care and treatment should receive that care from oncology nurses who meet a standard of practice through a comprehensive education program to ensure competency.

### C. Advanced practice nursing: Nurse practitioner and clinical nurse specialist

1. General
  - a) A master’s degree is the minimum education required for entry into the advanced practice nursing roles of nurse practitioner or clinical nurse specialist.
  - b) The four advanced practice roles recognized in the United States are the certified registered nurse anes-

- thetist, certified nurse midwife, nurse practitioner, and clinical nurse specialist.
2. ONS framework: ONS's *Oncology Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice* provides the framework from which advanced practice nursing roles can be delineated (Lubejko & Wilson, 2019).
  3. Cancer Care Ontario guidelines
    - a) Cancer Care Ontario (2018) has developed guidelines and advice on clarifying the roles of clinical nurse specialists and nurse practitioners in the delivery of cancer care.
    - b) The organization has also published guidelines on the effective use of advanced practice nurses in the delivery of adult cancer services (Bryant-Lukosius et al., 2015).
    - c) In January 2018, Cancer Care Ontario published additions to the guidelines that included expert recommendations on clinical nurse specialist and nurse practitioner roles, providing unpublished emerging practice evidence to fill in the gaps of previous guidelines (Nowell et al., 2018).
  4. Advanced practice nursing in radiation oncology
    - a) Advanced practice nursing in radiation oncology spans the continuum of cancer care from screening and cancer risk reduction to diagnosis and treatment, survivorship, palliative care, and the end of life.
    - b) Nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists may participate in institutional review boards and quality outcome and indicator monitoring, function as administrators or nurse leaders, and be involved in strategic planning and restructuring of the health-care and cancer care system.
  5. Nurse practitioner role in radiation oncology
    - a) In the United States, certification through successful postgraduate testing by a national nursing organization (e.g., American Association of Nurse Practitioners) is required to apply for advanced practice licensure.
      - (1) State licensure, in addition to employer credentialing, is required to enter into a general advanced practice role.
      - (2) The role in radiation oncology requires specialized education not offered in a general precicensure nurse practitioner program.
      - (3) The education and role of nurse practitioners as direct clinical care providers qualifies them to diagnose, treat, and manage acute and chronic illness within the scope of practice and to directly bill for services provided (American Association of Nurse Practitioners, 2019a).
      - (4) Clinical care may be provided to patients independently or in collaboration with a physician.
      - (5) Nurse practitioners have prescriptive authority for pharmacologic treatment of medical conditions. Prescribing pain medication (controlled

substances) requires federal and state registration. Radiation oncology nurse practitioners have a significant role in pain and symptom management.

- (6) The nurse practitioner role in research may include investigator-initiated studies or participation in collaborative group protocols with an interprofessional team (American Association of Nurse Practitioners, 2019b).
  - b) Currently, nurse practitioners working in the United States require two state licenses to practice: RN and advanced practice RN (American Association of Nurse Practitioners, 2019c).
    - (1) License to practice and scope of practice of nurse practitioners are granted by an individual state's nurse practice act.
    - (2) Scope-of-practice authority varies by state and may be full practice, reduced practice, or restrictive (supervisory) authority.
    - (3) The practice authority of each state is determined by state legislation and the nurse practice act.
6. Clinical nurse specialist role in radiation oncology
  - a) A clinical nurse specialist is an expert clinician whose role includes components of patient care, leadership, education of patients and staff, academic appointments, consultation, and research (Cancer Care Ontario, 2018; ONS, 2008).
  - b) The role may be further defined by the employing institution or job description.
  - c) Clinical nurse specialists provide complex health interventions and affect outcomes for high-risk patient populations; collaborate on health issues with patients, families, and interprofessional teams; and influence administrators and policy makers within and beyond various institutions, facilitating system change and advancing the profession of nursing.

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