A diagnosis of cancer can elicit a range of emotions and feelings that can cause significant anxiety and depression for patients and their support networks (McCaughan & McKenna, 2006; Mills & Sullivan, 1999). One of the prominent coping strategies that patients with cancer use to lessen anxiety is seeking out information (McCaughan & McKenna, 2006; Van der Molen, 2001). Education needs of patients with cancer require health professionals to take into consideration an aging population, financial challenges, cultural diversity, and linguistic and literary barriers (Treacy & Mayer, 2000). Promotion and understanding of treatment and sufficient knowledge to initiate self-care strategies to lessen their impact, particularly in the older adult population, are believed to be among the top challenges in oncology nursing today and in the future (Goodman & Riley, 1997).

The patient’s need and wish to be provided information in regard to diagnosis and any risks, benefits, and impacts of the proposed treatment are important (Cox, Jenkins, Catt, Langridge, & Fallowfield, 2006). However, the reality of supplying timely and appropriate information for patients with cancer is of concern for patients and healthcare providers worldwide (Mills & Sullivan, 1999).

Background

Educating and supporting patients with cancer, particularly patients who are having chemotherapy, are regarded as two of the most important tasks carried out by oncology nurses (Ireland, DePalma, Arneson, Stark, & Williamson, 2004). Patients being informed and proactive in their own care because of information supplied by nursing staff is, unfortunately, not guaranteed (Dodd & Miaskowski, 2000). Reaching this desired goal can be problematic, particularly when patients receive treatment every two to four weeks in an outpatient setting and are expected to learn and