The Role of Licensed Nursing Personnel in Radiation Oncology Part A: Results of a Descriptive Study

Giselle J. Moore-Higgs, ARNP, MSN, AOCN®, Deborah Watkins-Bruner, RN, PhD, Laura Balmer, RN, MS, ANP, Janice Johnson-Doneski, RN, BSN, OCN®, Paulette Komarny, RN, BSN, OCN®, RT(T), Beatrice Mautner, RN, MSN, OCN®, and Karima Velji, RN, MSc, AOCN®, PhD(c)

A cross North America, the role of licensed nursing personnel (licensed practical nurses, RNs, and advanced practice nurses [APNs]) in the field of radiation oncology has not been clear. Informal discussions at national and local meetings have made evident that nurses may be underutilized or that determination of their role may be subject to non-nursing supervisors. To date, a paucity of nursing literature has described the role, with which job descriptions for new positions can be developed or current roles further enhanced. With significant advances in radiation technology resulting in more patients receiving radiation therapy (RT) with curative intent, the role of licensed nurses in the field has grown. It also has the potential for substantial expansion in the near future as patients are given more options for treatment with new approaches to brachytherapy, intensity-modulated procedures, proton beam programs, and nonmalignant disease protocols.

To address this issue, the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) RT Special Interest Group (RT SIG) established a subcommittee comprised of RNs and APNs who worked in both academic and private practice radiation oncology centers. The primary goal of the subcommittee was to describe the current roles and responsibilities of licensed nursing personnel working in the...