Hematologic Malignancy Education for Stem Cell Transplantation Nurses

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Patient presentations and treatment protocols in the stem cell transplantation (SCT) practice setting are constantly evolving, multiple clinical trials are ongoing, state-of-the-art advanced care changes rapidly, and care of the patient before, during, and following transplantation is complex. Nursing practice in this population requires a specialized knowledge of individual protocols coupled with a broad understanding of disease presentation and treatment for the variety of diagnoses for which patients undergo SCT. The sheer volume of information related to the care of patients undergoing SCT is challenging for the most experienced nurses and, particularly, for new oncology nurses. The complexity and diversity of the SCT patient population and their care parallels the increasing generational, educational, and professional backgrounds of nursing staff, all of which necessitate the provision of consistent and evidence-based education for safe and effective patient care.

Background and Significance

Nurses’ lack of knowledge on how to locate accurate and reliable information, lack of access to the tools necessary to search for evidence-based information, and insufficient time to resolve these shortcomings are frequent barriers to meeting the demands of evidence-based practice (Pravikoff, Tanner, & Pierce, 2005). Pravikoff et al. (2005) reported that most RNs recognize the need for evidence-based information in their practice, but the majority admitted to obtaining that information from a peer or colleague rather than from a printed or electronic resource, largely because of nurses’ trust in their colleagues.

Nurses can access information in many ways. For example, some nurses may be inclined to search the Internet for information, which can provide unreliable, non–evidence-based data. In Pravikoff et al. (2005), 73% (n = 741) of nurse respondents stated they sometimes, frequently, or always use the Internet to obtain clinical information. In the acute care practice setting, where new graduate nurses composed more than 10% of a typical hospital or healthcare system staff, this instinctual use of the Internet for clinical resources may, in part, account for the fact that only 10% of hospital and health system executives felt that newly graduated nurses were completely prepared to provide safe care (Berkow, Virkstis, Stewart, & Conway, 2009). This is particularly true for SCT and cellular therapies, services that address the needs of patients from a variety of oncologic backgrounds.

To provide SCT nurses, particularly those new to the practice setting, with contemporary evidence-based information on the prominent underlying hematologic malignancies for which individuals undergo SCT, as well as the complications and oncologic emergencies for which these populations are at increased risk, an educational reference chart was developed by the first author of this article.