Advanced Practice Nursing Outcomes: A Review of Selected Empirical Literature

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Purpose/Objectives: To review selected empirical literature examining outcomes of advanced practice nursing with a specific focus on the work of oncology advanced practice nurses (APNs).

Data Sources: Published articles (descriptive and data-based) and books.

Data Synthesis: Well-designed, methodologically sound investigations offer clear and compelling evidence that APNs are effective in improving outcomes in diverse populations and settings. Data on outcomes of oncology APNs are more limited but do demonstrate statistically significant improvements in clinical outcomes in the homecare and ambulatory settings. The increase in oncology APNs and the evolution of viable roles for oncology APNs across cancer practice settings offer opportunities to further assess the outcomes of advanced practice nursing.

Implications for Nursing: Assessing the outcomes of advanced practice nursing care has been identified as a priority by the Oncology Nursing Society. Expansion of APN roles in oncology creates myriad opportunities to investigate this issue. APNs should be cognizant of the work that has been done in this area and use this knowledge as a foundation from which to launch further investigations.

The work of advanced practice nurses (APNs) is thought to enrich the healthcare system by adding value to the delivery of healthcare services (Spross & Heaney, 2000). Articulating how, why, and for whom they add value is critical to the future viability of the APN role and the delivery of quality healthcare services to the public. The need to understand the role that oncology APNs play in effecting outcomes was identified as a priority at the 1994 State of the Knowledge Conference on Advanced Practice in Oncology Nursing. The APN Survey Team reported that this issue remains unresolved and suggested an urgent need to undertake additional work in this area (Lynch, Cope, & Murphy-Ende, 2001). The purpose of this article is to explore selected empirical literature examining advanced practice nursing interventions and outcomes, with a focus on outcomes related to oncology advanced practice nursing. Goals of the work include outlining conceptual and methodologic issues pertinent to the measurement of advanced practice nursing outcomes, providing a brief review of the historical literature about advanced practice nursing effectiveness, examining relationships between oncology advanced practice nursing interventions and outcomes, considering challenges...