It is the Position of ONS That

- All patients with cancer benefit from palliative care.
- Palliative care should begin at the time of diagnosis and continue throughout bereavement.
- Physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual assessments are key components to the development of a comprehensive care plan for each patient.
- The family is the unit of care, with the patient viewed as part of the family and family as defined by the patient.
- Palliative care is provided by an interprofessional team that includes at least physicians, nurses, social workers, and spiritual care professionals. Additional team members can include pharmacists; nursing aides; respiratory, occupational, and physical therapists; psychologists; psychiatrists; bioethicists; volunteers; and allied personnel who are skilled, credentialed, or certified in the essentials of palliative care.
- The interprofessional team must recognize the complexity of the patient and family experience and be prepared to adjust care and goals based on the patient's or family's expressed needs.
- Family conferences to address goals of care are essential to ensure the team continues to remain focused on the patient's needs and goals of care.
- Oncology nurses are in a unique position to advocate for patients regarding access to and the delivery of quality palliative care.
- Oncology nurses must possess knowledge and skills in certain domains to deliver safe, quality palliative care, including (a) structure and processes of care; (b) physical aspects of care; (c) psychological and psychiatric aspects of care; (d) social aspects for care; (e) spiritual, religious, and existential aspects of care; (f) cultural aspects of care; (g) care of the imminently dying patient; and (h) ethical and legal aspects of care.
- All healthcare systems adopt the Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment paradigm to ensure respect for do-not-resuscitate orders when patients change levels or sites of care.
- Palliative care principles, at minimum, are incorporated into all oncology care sites, and access to palliative care experts is available for patients in all settings. Ideally, dedicated palliative care units and outpatient clinics are available for patients and families throughout the continuum of the illness.
- Oncology nurses play a role in engaging the public and providing fact-based information about care of people with advanced serious illness to encourage advance care planning and informed choices based on the needs and values of individuals.

Approved by the ONS Board of Directors, October 2014.
References


