The Oncology Nursing Society Rapid Review and Research Priorities for Cancer Care in the Context of COVID-19

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OBJECTIVES: To identify research priorities addressing COVID-19 that build on the 2019–2022 Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Research Agenda, in alignment with ONS's mission to promote excellence in oncology nursing and quality cancer care.

METHODS & VARIABLES: Priority areas were identified using a multistep approach combining rapid review of the literature; consultation with experts/stakeholders; and review of priorities from other funding agencies, public health, and cancer-focused organizations.

RESULTS: The rapid research response team identified five priority areas for research related to COVID-19: (a) effect of COVID-19 on disparities in cancer care; (b) symptom science, palliative care, and end-of-life care research; (c) access to safe and effective cancer care, clinical trials, and research; (d) communication and partnerships with patients and caregivers; and (e) effect of COVID-19 on nursing workforce, support, and professional development. Cross-cutting themes were also identified.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING: Oncology nurses are well positioned to address the research priorities and cross-cutting themes identified through this review. The use of innovative methodologic approaches and attention to disparities are necessary to advance cancer care related to COVID-19.

During the past year, the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) has caused unprecedented disruption to the fabric of cancer care worldwide (Richards et al., 2020). In addition to affecting patients' ability to access screening, diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship care for their cancer, growing data indicate that the pandemic has deepened existing racial, socioeconomic, geographic, and other disparities in disease burden and care (Killerby et al., 2020; Selden & Berdahl, 2020), undercutting decades of work in these areas. To continue providing safe, effective cancer care and continue the mission of providing just, equitable cancer care for all, oncology nurses need clear, rigorous evidence to drive clinical decision-making, health policy, and public health messaging.

To address these needs, the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) tasked a team of researchers to review the literature related to oncology and COVID-19. Goals of the resulting research agenda were to (a) identify critical gaps in the knowledge related to COVID-19 and cancer care and (b) describe research priorities to guide nurse-led research during the pandemic and its aftermath. The resulting priorities build on the 2019–2022 ONS Research Agenda (Von Ah et al., 2019). The priorities were refined related to COVID-19 and introduce new areas for knowledge discovery, translational research, and policy development that will be critical for addressing the evolving pandemic.

Methods

Search Strategy

To account for the rapid pace of research and evidence that emerged related to COVID-19, the team employed a broad strategy using PubMed®, Scopus®,