

The average length of stay as an inpatient for all breast cancer patients has been reduced from 3.6 days to 1.4 days. Early discharge is possible when careful attention is paid to perioperative care and patient information as well as surgical and anaesthetic care according to modern standards avoiding postoperative pain and nausea. Furthermore wound and drain management must follow clinical guidelines.

Flow charts have been made so that almost every patient being admitted to the clinic follows the same course of treatment, from the first visit to the outpatient department, through being admitted to the ward, to being discharged again from the outpatient department.

The nursing model is primary nursing. Nursing interventions are described in a critical pathway. The nurses are specially trained and have good communication skills.

Each patient is allocated a named contact nurse on the very first visit to the outpatient department. The contact nurse follows the patient all the way through, both as an in and outpatient, and retains overall responsibility for the patient's care during her stay on the ward. The aim is that the patient sees her allocated nurse no less than 75% of the times she is in contact with the department, either as an in or outpatient.

Before being discharged the patients are assessed according to fixed discharge criteria such as psychological wellbeing, physical performance, sufficient knowledge about wound and pain management. Prior to discharge the nurse also makes sure that there is a next of kin present at home and that the patient knows how to contact the nurses at the clinic. A written questionnaire was developed consisting of 15 multiple choice and open questions and patients were interviewed before and after implementation of the new pathway. The overall assessment of the new procedure was good as shown by high patient satisfaction. The interviews also showed that patients had sufficient knowledge to cope with early discharge.

Early discharge after breast cancer surgery is feasible, safe and popular with patients without compromising the quality of care.

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POSTER

Designing and implementing a generic oral chemotherapy diary into clinical practice

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Background: The increasing use of oral anti cancer therapies has resulted in International concern regarding patient safety. These factors, and results from an initial study prompted the development of a generic oral chemotherapy patient diary. A second study then evaluated the integration of the diary into practice. The diary has subsequently been awarded the 2008 European Oncology Nursing Society, 'Excellence in Patient Education' prize.

Materials and Methods: Results of the initial ethnographic study suggests cancer patients and carers are poorly prepared to manage oral therapies, both in terms of self-medication and early reporting of treatment-related symptoms. It further appears that patients find oral chemotherapy diaries a helpful tool to promote self-care. The generic diary was developed in partnership with key local stakeholders including patients. Existing diaries were reviewed and core components agreed. The second, mixed methods feasibility study, examined the process of integrating the diary into clinical practice. This study, observed the impact of the diary on adherence, self efficacy and symptom identification and reporting. Both studies included patients with either colorectal or haematological malignancies.

Results: The diary appears to provide a simple, generic tool to assist patients and their carers to manage their oral chemotherapy treatments. The diary was used as a prompt and to formally record when doses have been taken. The symptom traffic light system, which alerts patients when to call the hospital for symptom advice, was particularly well evaluated for its pictorial format.

Conclusions: The diary has been implemented across two cancer networks and begins to address some of the key issues, concerns and educational gaps surrounding the care of patients undergoing oral chemotherapy. As it is generic, it represents significant potential benefit to a large cohort of patients in the future. However, the diary is not considered the sole solution to minimise risk, but as part of a comprehensive care package.

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POSTER

Quality of life for children and family in isolation

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The nursing care of a child and family can be a real and difficult challenge, especially when physical and emotional suffering is involved.

When the nursing care involves the quality of life parameter, all the process gets another dimension and requires cooperation between all elements of the multi-disciplinary team.

According to Wallender, quoted in Oliveira (2007), quality of life in children and adolescents can be defined as the combination of subjective and objective aspects that promote the sense of well-beingness, concerning several domains of life, considered important in their own culture and historical time, according to the universal human rights patterns.

The children who are submitted to bone marrow transplant recipient treatment have to go through difficult, painful and excessively aggressive moments at a time when playing should be their only concern. It is possible to provide happy moments like birthday parties, family dinners and visits of celebrities when all elements of the team cooperate. This project of providing unique moments to children/parents is a daily practice in the UTM.

It is possible and encouraging to promote moments full of quality of life inside the bone-marrow transplant unit, even if the professionals must hide behind masks and gloves.

Sharing this project about promotion of quality of life and unique moments to the children and parents is a challenging goal to our unit.

Objectives: It is our purpose to:

- Reflect about nursing care of children and family, as far as quality of life is concerned, at the bone-marrow transplant unit.
- Share moments and strategies that brought and/or improved quality of life to children/parents in the UTM.

Methodology: The methodological strategies will be based on description; a discussion will also be organised so that professionals involved can share experience and knowledge.

Conclusion: Promoting moments of quality in the life of children and families in isolation at UTM allows us to individualise caring, minimise complications and directs to a successful coping. It also brings a smile to the most difficult days of their lives.

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POSTER

Information needs of newly diagnosed breast cancer patients

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The aim of this study was to establish the information needs of patients newly diagnosed with breast cancer within the Midlands area of Ireland. A descriptive survey was employed. 73 structured self-report questionnaires were distributed to women who met the study's inclusion criteria. A response rate of 95% was achieved. Women (n = 69) with breast cancer who were between six months and four years post diagnosis returned the questionnaires voluntarily.

The study findings provide further corroboration for established evidence promoting the importance of women with breast cancer being well-informed and supported at the time of their diagnosis. The study respondents demonstrated a very high level of information needs; a finding congruent with other international studies carried in this area. Other main findings included the need for information regarding recurrence of disease; how to tell if the disease had come back and treatment related informational support. Moreover, no statistical difference between younger and older women regarding their informational needs was identified. Finally, respondents identified nurses as one of their main sources of information, confirming the important role that specialist nurses can play in the provision of adequate and timely information at time of diagnosis with breast cancer. This research highlighted that patient's have high expectations and demands for the amount, timing and quality of the information that they receive. As a result this provides the specialist breast care nurse with the unique opportunity to ensure that the information given can be tailored to meet the needs and preferences of the individual women.

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POSTER

A pathway to continence

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The person with colostomy faces several problems related to fecal incontinence and the need to use a stoma pouch. The irrigation technique contributes to solve a significant part of those problems. Being aware of this fact, we developed an investigational study.

The goal is to analyze factors influencing the colostomate to adhere or not to the irrigation technique.

It is an exploratory descriptive study with quantitative approach. A convenience sample of 80 volunteer participants with descendent or