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POSTER

Can a relative become a good health worker in managing the central venous catheter of the tumor patient? Experience of the Rizzoli Orthopaedic Institute (Italy)

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The chemotherapy unit for bone tumors is a ward of 12 beds in the department of musculo-skeletal tumors in the Rizzoli Orthopedic Institute * Bologna, Italy. Only 5% of the patients in the center come from our region, the rest are from other regions or abroad. These patients are affected by osteosarcoma or Ewing's sarcoma of the extremities. In 80% of cases a long-term central venous catheter (CVC) is inserted not only to carry out cycles of chemotherapy in the hospital but also to perform repeated blood tests, intravenous therapies and transfusions needed at home. To ensure that treatment is really effective and at the same time safe, the parents of each patient are taught all the procedures to manage the CVC at home. This is to enable blood to be taken, and infusion, medication and heparinisation to be carried out. This is advantageous compared to putting these patients in the hands of the family doctor or peripheral health structures that are often not competent in the management of these devices. The nursing team, backed up by doctors, have designed their own training course to acquire the necessary know-how in order to teach people without specific skills some complex healthcare procedures. Subsequently, a training course was set up for relatives, which consists of a theoretical part and a practical one. For theory written and audiovisual material is used; for the practical lessons a small laboratory has been equipped with a professional dummy and the material needed for simulations. 52 patients entered in the study between June 1999 and June 2000. Infection rate decreased from 11.5% to 7.6%, malfunction from 38.4% to 23% and only 1.6% never used the CVC at home compared to 13.4% the year before. The analysis of results shows that the aims have been fulfilled.

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The long and short of communication skills training: A qualitative evaluation and comparison of participant perceptions of two approaches to communication skills training

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Introduction: Good communication with patients with cancer is a vital aspect of care. By the year 2002 it will be a pre-condition of post-basic qualification that UK health professionals working with patients with cancer can demonstrate competence in communication with patients. Little however is known of the best approach to training to improve communication skills. A comparison of the effectiveness of two approaches to the delivery of communication skills training has been undertaken. Contact time (26 hours) and teaching methods were standardised for a three-day communication skills programme integrated over a period of 6 months into academic courses and a three-day course delivered on consecutive days. Aim: To provide a qualitative evaluation and direct comparison of participant perceptions of these two approaches. Method: Eight focus groups of between 8 and 12 participants representing the two different approaches to delivery were set up. A semi-structured topic guide was used to explore participants views of the negative and positive aspects of the courses. Each focus group encounter was audio-taped and tapes were transcribed and thematically analysed to generate an in-depth evaluation and comparison of perceptions. Results: 96 nurses participated in the focus groups. An overwhelmingly positive evaluation of both approaches was evident. The opportunity for participants to devise their own agenda, the pros and cons of role-play and optimum group size emerged as important aspects of both types of training. Comparison between participants perceptions of the different approaches is made. The findings are discussed in terms of their potential impact on designing future communication skills programmes to meet the needs of the participants.

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POSTER

An introduction to research programme for Greek cancer nurses. The participants evaluation

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Purpose: It is widely acknowledged across many European countries that nursing research in cancer care is in its infancy. Educational and professional organizations must respond by finding ways to enhance nurses' capacity to be involved in nursing research. This program has been developed out of that need.

The poster will present the development and evaluation of a nursing led program which aimed encourage nurses to develop a questioning approach to their work and engage a wider understanding approach of the importance of research as a basis for professional practice.

Methods: Using a collaborative approach a project group was established to develop and implement an "Introduction to research program under the auspices of the Hellenic Oncology Nursing Society together with a group of experts. The program was advertised through the Hellenic Association's Newsletter.

The 30 nurses who attended the 30 hours program offered in five hours formal sessions monthly (November 1999 to May 2000) in Athens, were given a self administered questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the programme.

Results: This research awareness program was very positively evaluated in respect to its scope, design and teachers. At the end nurses were more convinced of the importance of nursing research and its practical implication.

Conclusion: This program was very well appreciated by the Greek participants and has led to a second one through their suggestions to practice in smaller groups by developing small research projects.

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POSTER

Assessing fatigue in patients with lung cancer: perceptions of patients and healthcare professionals

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Purpose: The overall aim of the study is to gain a greater understanding of fatigue in patients with lung cancer undergoing radiotherapy and the healthcare professionals involved in their care. More specifically, to assess the nature, severity and intensity of fatigue in this group of patients and evaluate the effectiveness of self-care behaviours. At the same time to explore health professionals present knowledge of fatigue and experience of symptom management. This project stems from the findings of a recent survey conducted by the researchers to evaluate how nurses assess cancer related fatigue.

Method: A descriptive design was employed using a weekly diary for patients with lung cancer receiving radical and high dose palliative radiotherapy to complete during treatment and one month later. A total sample of 53 patients were recruited over a ten month period and a random sample of 11 were interviewed to further explore the symptom of fatigue. Healthcare professionals involved in the care of patients with lung cancer were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews.

Results: Data collection is now complete. Data has been entered on an Access data base and is currently being analysed by a statistician. Staff and patient interviews have been transcribed and will be analysed using content analysis.

Conclusion: It is well recognised within the literature that fatigue is a significant problem for patients with cancer. The results from this study will provide information about the extent of this symptom specific to patients receiving radiotherapy for lung cancer. In addition a working knowledge in the use of diaries in assessing fatigue has been gained.

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POSTER

Perception of fatigue in oncology patients. Health education

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Overview: Fatigue has been identified by patients with cancer as the major obstacle to normal functioning and a good quality of life. It is a nearly universal symptom in patients undergoing primary antineoplastic therapy or treatment with biologic response modifiers and is extremely common in populations with persistent or advanced disease.