

Results: The two major stresses stemmed from the death of patients (81% groups) and the psychological care of patients (75% groups). Helpful aspects of the groups described were discussion of problems, sharing of experience, expression of feelings, reduction of work stress, and better understanding of patients' holistic needs. The most unhelpful aspect was the time of carrying out the group, i.e. after the end of the day shift. Clarification of own needs concerning self-growth and self-differentiation, as well as re-evaluation of professional goals set in an oncology setting were among the benefits got.

Conclusion: Nursing support groups can form a safe and trustful environment in which work-related issues and personal feelings can be explored and shared among members. Stress minimization and job accomplishments can be considered and achieved.

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POSTER

Intra-uterine brachytherapy: educational needs for nurses undertaking direct patient care

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Purpose: Nurses have a responsibility to update and develop in order to maintain and increase standards of care by enabling staff to increase standards of knowledge and competence.

Methods: Nurses have a responsibility to update and develop their practice in order to maintain standards of care. No formal training of the nursing staff looking after patients receiving brachytherapy for uterine cancers was recorded. A research-based teaching pack was initiated and teaching sessions were implemented. This training initiative was not only supported by management but also at a higher level. In its document 'Improving the Quality of Cancer Services' the Government is committed to 'ensure that all Health Care Professionals involved in cancer care receive appropriate training and continuing professional development'.

Results: This resulted in the nursing practice of the staff on the gynaecological brachytherapy ward being able to provide research-based nursing care. The teaching pack was audited and staff were assessed with competency based practice forms which will be updated yearly.

Conclusion: Brachytherapy training had been neglected on a formal basis. This was addressed and resulted in in-house training sessions for all staff and the development of competencies to ensure safe practice which were theoretically based. Brachytherapy is a specialised treatment. Nurses need to be highly trained in order to deliver the best care possible. Side effects/complications of the treatment can be as disfiguring/psychologically damaging as the cancer itself. The nurses need to be highly trained in order to prevent/deal with problems that may occur with intra-uterine brachytherapy.

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POSTER

An evaluation of the UK experience of a 'training the trainers' workshop for the 'learning to live with cancer' programme

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Introduction: A 'Training the Trainers' workshop was piloted in the UK for nurses interested in running a 'Learning to live with cancer', patient education programme. Over three days, the participants learnt in depth about the aims and objectives of the 'Learning to live with cancer' programme and the practical issues leading to successful implementation. Group dynamics were explored through experiential workshops. A manual for use in the UK was also piloted at the workshop.

Method: The workshop was evaluated in three stages, starting with the selection process for accepting participants on to the workshop. By the end of the course, each participant had devised an action plan for implementing a programme and finally, they completed a questionnaire about the workshop.

Findings: Feedback from the questionnaire was positive and the participants benefited from sharing experiences. The selection criteria were judged as being appropriate, as all the participants felt in a strong position to implement the programme in their own workplaces. Participants will be followed up regularly, to assess the progress of the action plans and to identify any barriers to successful implementation.

Recommendations: The 'Training the Trainers' workshops are an essential component of implementing the 'Learning to live with cancer' programme. In addition to these workshops, there is also a need to train more

nurses in hospitals where the programme is already in place, to ensure a viable future for patient education.

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POSTER

Clinical trial assessing the delivery of a replication deficient adenovirus delivery for therapy of cancers of the liver or head & neck

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Purpose: To provide an overview of the current gene therapy study within the university of Birmingham.

Background: Genes are the biological units of heredity, which determine obvious traits such as hair and eye colour. They consist of deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA, a highly organised molecule which forms the basis of the genetic code. Translation of this code within a cell leads to the production of specified proteins involved in a multitude of various functions. Recent advances in the study of DNA have enabled the identification of specific genes with known functions and the manipulation of those genes into specific viral vectors. These vectors are able to carry the genes into target cells and cause expression of foreign proteins within that cell.

Within the clinical trials unit we are currently carrying out research with the administration of a genetically modified Adenovirus. This virus has been specifically engineered for therapeutic application so that it can still infect target cells but can no longer replicate itself once inside the cell. The virus also carries an inserted gene expressing an enzyme (nitroreductase - Ntr) capable of converting a normally harmless compound (CB1954) into a cytotoxic drug.

The virus will be administered by intra-tumoural injection either into a liver tumour or a squamous cell carcinoma of the Head & Neck.

Aim: The primary aim of the study is to monitor the safety and tolerability of the Adenovirus construct and verify suitable expression of Ntr within the tumour. Following identification of Ntr expression administration of the Prodrug (CB1954) will be evaluated.

Results: Six patients have been recruited into the liver arm of the trial and one patient into the Head & Neck arm of the trial. Administration of the adenovirus has not been associated with any reported problems to date and dose escalation continues to determine the viral dose required to activate the nitroreductase enzyme.

Conclusion: Gene therapy is a very new and exciting concept in the field of clinical research, and offers a new treatment paradigm for curing human disease. However it is unlikely, that gene therapy alone will play a curative role in cancer treatments for some years.

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POSTER

The positive effects of specialist nursing intervention for patients receiving radiotherapy to the head and neck

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Radical radiotherapy to the head and neck is an intensive treatment whose acute side effects, notably mucositis, can be associated with potentially serious and even fatal complications. Many of these complications can be minimised by thorough preparation and close monitoring of the patient throughout the course of treatment. The specialist nurse is ideally placed within the multi-disciplinary team to co-ordinate this.

Expert assessment of, for example, nutritional status, oral hygiene, the tracheostomy (if present) and any unhealed wounds, allows problems to be identified and addressed before the patient starts treatment. Once the acute side effects of radiotherapy have started, the patient's condition can deteriorate rapidly, over 24 to 48 hours. It is therefore essential to have a named person, within the hospital, that the patient and the hospital staff can call upon outside of clinic sessions. This person should be able to assess whether interventions such as increased analgesia, antibiotics or instigation of enteral feeding are required. Two other important aspects of care are information-giving and health promotion, especially advice on and help with smoking cessation - a major issue in this patient group. It can be argued that all of the above are best dealt with by a specialist nurse through direct action or be referral to other health care professionals.

This presentation will examine the specific needs of head and neck radiotherapy patients, the positive effects of specialist nursing intervention and the role of the specialist nurse within the head and neck oncology multidisciplinary team and.