

This material is protected by U.S. copyright law. Unauthorized reproduction is prohibited.
To purchase reprints or request permission to reproduce, e-mail reprints@ons.org.

Advanced Practice Nursing Outcomes: A Review of Selected Empirical Literature

Regina S. Cunningham, PhD, RN, AOCN®

Purpose/Objectives: To review selected empirical literature examining outcomes of advanced practice nursing with a specific focus on the work of oncology advanced practice nurses (APNs).

Data Sources: Published articles (descriptive and data-based) and books.

Data Synthesis: Well-designed, methodologically sound investigations offer clear and compelling evidence that APNs are effective in improving outcomes in diverse populations and settings. Data on outcomes of oncology APNs are more limited but do demonstrate statistically significant improvements in clinical outcomes in the homecare and ambulatory settings. The increase in oncology APNs and the evolution of viable roles for oncology APNs across cancer practice settings offer opportunities to further assess the outcomes of advanced practice nursing.

Conclusions: Understanding the effects of oncology advanced practice nursing on clinical, cost, and satisfaction outcomes is critical. These data will help to explain how APNs can be used most effectively in the healthcare system to ensure the delivery of quality cancer care.

Implications for Nursing: Assessing the outcomes of advanced practice nursing care has been identified as a priority by the Oncology Nursing Society. Expansion of APN roles in oncology creates myriad opportunities to investigate this issue. APNs should be cognizant of the work that has been done in this area and use this knowledge as a foundation from which to launch further investigations.

Key Points . . .

- ▶ The complex care needs of patients with cancer have created opportunities for growth in oncology advanced practice nurse (APN) roles in a number of practice settings.
- ▶ Strong evidence from well-designed investigations supports the effectiveness of oncology APNs in the home setting, and evidence is emerging in the ambulatory area.
- ▶ The knowledge base for APN outcomes needs to be expanded. Systematic evaluations of the process of care provided by APNs to patients with different types of cancer receiving care in diverse practice environments are needed to more fully inform the understanding of this issue.

Goal for CE Enrollees:

To enhance nurses' knowledge about the outcomes of advanced practice nursing with a specific focus on the work of oncology advanced practice nurses (APNs).

Objectives for CE Enrollees:

- On completion of this CE, the participant will be able to
1. Define the term advanced practice nurse.
 2. Discuss the impact of APN practice on clinical, cost, and satisfaction outcomes.
 3. Identify aspects of advanced practice nursing that need to be studied further.

The work of advanced practice nurses (APNs) is thought to enrich the healthcare system by adding value to the delivery of healthcare services (Spross & Heaney, 2000). Articulating how, why, and for whom they add value is critical to the future viability of the APN role and the delivery of quality healthcare services to the public. The need to understand the role that oncology APNs play in effecting outcomes was identified as a priority at the 1994 State of the Knowledge Conference on Advanced Practice in Oncology Nursing. The APN Survey Team reported that this issue remains unresolved and suggested an urgent need to undertake additional work in this area (Lynch, Cope, & Murphy-Ende, 2001). The purpose of this article is to explore selected empirical literature examining advanced practice nursing interventions and outcomes, with a focus on outcomes related to oncology advanced practice nursing. Goals of the work include outlining conceptual and methodologic issues pertinent to the measurement of advanced practice nursing outcomes, providing a brief review of the historical literature about advanced practice nursing effectiveness, examining relationships between oncology advanced practice nursing interventions and outcomes, considering challenges



Regina S. Cunningham, PhD, RN, AOCN®, is a chief nursing officer and director of ambulatory care at the Cancer Institute of New Jersey in New Brunswick and a clinical assistant professor of nursing at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark. At the time this article was written, she was a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Funding for the program mentioned was received from the Oncology Nursing Society and the American Cancer Society. (Submitted February 2003. Accepted for publication May 23, 2003.)

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/04.ONF.219-232