

Designing and Evaluating an Innovative Education and Development Pathway for Cancer Nurses

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Background

A regional cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) review (2019) highlighted a gap in the education provision for the cancer specialist. The Advanced Practitioner pathway was established but there were limited development opportunities designed to meet the specific needs of the cancer specialist workforce. Funding was secured from HEE to support creation of cancer specific MSc modules, alongside additional funding to develop aspiring and existing cancer nurses.

Methods

Key activities shaping this project included:

1. Scoping exercises to ascertain training needs and availability of site-specific cancer modules.
2. Gap analysis of education offers related to cancer CNS role
3. Forming steering groups of experts to develop the content and format of the modules
4. Aligning the modules with an academic pathway
5. Formulation of a partnership with HEI
6. Delivery and evaluation of new courses
7. Mapping to the national ACCEND framework

Results

Four modules: Principles of Personalised Care, Psychological Skills in Cancer, Advanced Communication Skills, and Advances in Cancer Care, were developed and delivered from Sept 2022 to June 2024, with research and leadership modules supplementing the pathway. 45 cancer CNSs and 3 AHPs have collectively undertaken 94 modules with students progressing to post-graduate qualifications, up to a Masters Degree.

The modules are aligned with the ACCEND domains and CiPs. Evaluations demonstrate the modules are relevant to the CNS role and have a positive impact on delivery of clinical services, enhancing patients' experience. Additionally, the workforce feels valued. A flexible timescale for undertaking the pathway was offered following feedback.

94 modules have been studied by health care professionals between Autumn 2022 and Spring 2024, broken down as follows:



26
Psychological support skills in cancer care



10
Advances in cancer care



24
Principles of personalised care



8
Advanced communication skills



19
Research skills



7
Self-leadership

I feel that I can describe the actual value that a CNS adds and that I am able to quantify what benefit we provide to the patients and to the service itself and the Trust as a whole

The more that I have learned, the more confident I feel that I am really doing my best to support my patients

I feel incredibly fortunate to be able to access so much relevant education

Conclusion

The cancer specific modules and pathway are well received and supported by the students and their organisations. The participants have highlighted that the knowledge and skills gained through the course have impacted positively on self, team, service, and organisation and support the implementation of ACCEND. There is scope for further project development with wider participation.

