

# Oncology Nurse Generalist Competencies

## Oncology Nursing Society's initiative to establish best practice

Michele E. Gaguski, MSN, RN, AOCN®, CHPN, NE-BC, APN-C, Kim George, MSN, APRN, ACNS-BC, OCN®, Susan D. Bruce, MSN, RN, OCN®, AOCNS®, Edie Brucker, MSN, MPH, AGPCNP-BC, Carol Leija, MSN, RN, OCN®, Kristine B. LeFebvre, MSN, RN, AOCN®, and Heather Thompson Mackey, RN, MSN, ANP-BC, AOCN®

**BACKGROUND:** A project team was formulated to create evidence-based oncology nurse generalist competencies (ONGCs) to establish best practices in competency development, including high-risk tasks, critical thinking criteria, and measurement of key areas for oncology nurses.

**OBJECTIVES:** This article aims to describe the process and the development of ONGCs.

**METHODS:** This article explains how the ONGCs were accomplished, and includes outcomes and suggestions for use in clinical practice.

**FINDINGS:** Institutions can use the ONGCs to assess and develop competency programs, offer educational strategies to measure proficiency, and establish processes to foster a workplace committed to mentoring and teaching future oncology nurses.

### KEYWORDS

oncology nurse generalist competencies; education; clinical practice; standards

### DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

10.1188/17.CJON.679-687

**ONCOLOGY NURSES PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE** in delivering quality care to patients with cancer. Given the intricate healthcare needs of people with cancer, comprehensive knowledge, high-level engagement with interprofessional teams, self-reflection, critical thinking, and clinical skills are essential to ensuring the safe delivery of high-quality nursing care in the healthcare environment. Nurses are equipped to provide safe, proficient, and effective interventions to people with cancer across the disease trajectory, from preventive screening to end-of-life care. The complex technological environment, coupled with the ever-evolving science and rapid assimilation of research into practice in the oncologic specialty, requires oncology nurses to attain and maintain a high level of competency to adequately and safely care for people with cancer. The *Oncology Nurse Generalist Competencies (ONGC)* (Oncology Nursing Society [ONS], 2016) provide a framework to ensure quality outcomes.

### Background

As noted in *ONGC* (ONS, 2016), the Institute of Medicine ([IOM], 2011), now referred to as the Health and Medicine Division of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, published *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, which offers recommendations for improving nursing practice. IOM (2011) capitalized on the necessity of educating nurses and assessing their competency over time to ensure high-quality care. In 2016, IOM published an update to the report, stating that, although improvements had been made, more were needed. In addition, they described the nurse's responsibility of providing a "continuum of services" (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016, p. 1), including delivering direct patient care, promoting health, educating patients, and coordinating care (ONS, 2016).

In *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century*, IOM (2001) identified several components to a high-quality cancer care delivery