

Oncology Nursing Distance Education Course

If you are caring for patients with cancer then you might want to consider enrolling in the Oncology Nursing Distance Education Course (ONDEC). According to the Canadian Cancer Society, an estimated 171,000 new cases of cancer (excluding 75,100 non-melanoma skin cancers) and 75,300 deaths from cancer will occur in Canada in 2009. Based on current incidence rates, 40% of Canadian women and 45% of men will develop cancer during their lifetimes.

The Oncology Nursing Distance Education Course was developed in the early 1990's by Nurse Educators at the Cross Cancer Institute in Edmonton, Alberta. Current enrolment includes health care professionals from Canada, England, Australia, South Africa, Malta, United Arab Emirates and Pakistan.

The course curriculum provides a framework for comprehensive oncology nursing knowledge including:

- cancer biology - content includes genetics, carcinogenesis, metastasis, tumor classification & grading, diagnosis, staging, grading and treatment planning
- cancer epidemiology - content includes terminology & trends, epidemiologic research, primary & secondary prevention and cancer genetic risk assessment
- cancer treatments - content includes surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, biotherapy and hematopoietic cell transplantation
- oncologic emergencies - content includes structural and metabolic emergencies
- cancer diseases - content includes acute & chronic leukemia, lymphoma, breast, lung, colorectal and prostate cancers

- symptom management - includes pain, fatigue, dyspnea, delirium and GI symptoms

Each of the six units includes learning activities and review questions. The course manual is supplemented by a comprehensive nursing textbook and peer reviewed journal publications. Exams are administered by a proctor at intervals throughout the course and students have unlimited access to a full-time tutor by email or telephone throughout the time they are enrolled in the course.

The course provides a solid foundation in oncology knowledge that can be applied to everyday nursing practice in all hospital and community settings. ONDEC graduates come from Canada and around the world, and include novice and expert nurses, nurse educators, undergraduate nursing students, nurses preparing for a career change and allied health professionals.

Students are enrolled on the first day of each month throughout the year and are provided 10 months to complete the course. If students are unable to complete the course in the 10 months provided, they have the option of purchasing extensions. It is recommended that students enrolled in ONDEC plan to dedicate 6 to 8 hours per week to course activities. Upon successful completion, students will receive a certificate of completion and a pin. Students may use the hours for this course towards their continuing education credits which may be required by provincial associations. Several Canadian Universities provide credit for ONDEC as a 3-credit, undergraduate elective. ONDEC is consistent with the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology (CANO) standards for oncology nursing care and will support the ongoing education and professional development of nurses working with cancer patients.

The course fees are \$450 plus the cost of the textbook, supplementary readings and GST. For further information about this course please call Marie Kemp, Course Tutor at 780-577-8076 or email ACB.ondec@albertahealthservices.ca.



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