The Emerging Role of the Oncology Nurse Practitioner: A Collaborative Model Within the Private Practice Setting

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Key Points . . .

➤ The availability and use of oncology nurse practitioners (ONPs) in private practice is growing quickly, but the process of role development has not been discussed widely.
➤ ONP success in private practice settings will depend on the extent to which a collaborative model stressing shared goals, responsibility, accountability, and practice philosophy can be implemented.
➤ Barriers to successful role implementation can be overcome with a combination of verbal and written agreements.
➤ Success of the ONP role in private practice can be facilitated by a few simple but important approaches to introducing the role to the patients and staff and by yearly evaluation of what is successful and what needs to be adapted.

The Emerging Oncology Nurse Practitioner Role

Initially, the role of the nurse practitioner (NP) developed in response to a need for advanced practice nursing skills in the primary-care setting, specifically in the area of pediatrics. Changes in health care have been challenging for professionals and patients alike, yet these new demands are providing the impetus for the expanding role of the oncology nurse practitioner (ONP). Although the role of the ONP is relatively new, the specialty of oncology has utilized the advanced practice nursing model for decades with the position of clinical nurse specialist. Cancer care is complex, and patient needs for symptom management, education, palliation, and psychosocial support demand advanced nursing knowledge and clinical skills (Mast, 1998). ONPs are prepared to manage the care of this challenging population in a variety of practice settings. The emerging role of the ONP in the private practice setting can be successful when based on a collaborative practice model with shared goals, shared responsibility and accountability, and, finally, a shared philosophy of practice (Kedziera & Levy, 1994).