

# Supporting the Educational and Professional Development Needs of Cancer Nurses



Cancer care is becoming increasingly complex, requiring nurses to continually update their knowledge to stay current with the latest advancements. Access to educational opportunities supports cancer nurses in their professional growth and career advancement while fostering a culture of lifelong learning within the profession.

In the 2022 CNSA Cancer Nursing Workforce Survey, 55% of respondents reported they had post-graduate qualifications.<sup>1,2</sup> However, many reported that working in regional and rural areas posed a particular challenge to accessing higher education.<sup>4</sup>

Survey respondents with post-graduate qualifications are<sup>1,2</sup>



**73%**  
Metropolitan



**65%**  
Regional



**60%**  
Remote



**61% of nurses** surveyed reported adequate education **support for their role.**<sup>1</sup>



**52% of nurses** surveyed reported adequate opportunities for **career progression.**<sup>1</sup>

## Barriers to education and professional development opportunities

The survey highlighted two main barriers to professional development and education: 1) a lack of workplace opportunities to access education, and 2) a lack of time, compounded by high workloads and staff shortages, which means nurses have to undertake education on their own time.<sup>1,2</sup> Other barriers reported include distance from tertiary educational institutions, cost and personal time commitments.

### Comments from cancer nurses surveyed.<sup>1</sup>



*"Most educational opportunities are in the cities, which is often expensive and time-consuming."*

*"There is little time for nurses to complete education/teaching in work time, due to workload."*

*"Those that are able to commence postgraduate education are having difficulty balancing family, work and study since study leave was abolished."*

*"If anything, I would like to have more time to dedicate to my own education, but this is essentially something I do in my own time."*



Challenges in accessing education and professional development opportunities directly impact job satisfaction, improved access could help reduce stress levels and improve self-efficacy and work performance.<sup>1-3</sup>

## Improving education and professional development opportunities

To ensure the workforce is equipped to deliver high-quality cancer care for all Australians, nurses need improved access to cancer specific-education and professional development opportunities to enable them to better support patient care.

### Nurses surveyed suggested cancer should be incorporated into undergraduate curricula.<sup>1</sup>



*Greater cancer education resources in universities for a better-prepared workforce.*



### Nurses surveyed called for more post-graduate cancer-specific education and workplace training opportunities to support their continued professional development.<sup>1</sup>



*“Providing ongoing specialist education at a tertiary level to maintain high-quality ongoing cancer care with interested and qualified nursing staff.”*

*“Organisations supporting furthering education, such as paid time off to attend workshops or conferences.”*

*“Increased staff development and protected time for specialty education.”*

*“More educational opportunities for staff and networking to learn from other centres and nurses.”*



### Nurses surveyed called for financial support for learning and professional development.<sup>1</sup>



*“More funding for full-time educators and time for education opportunities.”*

*“More research fellowships and paid education opportunities to develop evidence-based care.”*

*“Scholarships to upskill. Support from large public hospitals to pursue post-graduate degrees including assessment support and educational paid days.”*



### Education and professional development opportunities will be key to attracting nurses to the profession and workforce retention.<sup>1,2</sup>



*Entice and attract new staff into cancer nursing with mentorship programmes, education opportunities, and fostering a nurturing learning environment.*



*Structured pathways for cancer nurses to advance in their careers, including roles, responsibilities, education and training.*



**CNSA is committed to supporting cancer nurses with access to education and professional development opportunities, including an updated cancer nursing competency framework.**

For more information visit: <https://www.cnsa.org.au/congressevents/education-events>

#### REFERENCES

1. CNSA Cancer Nursing Workforce Survey 2022. Full Report Published 2023.
2. Bradford, N., Moore, E., Taylor, K. et al. The cancer nursing workforce in Australia: a national survey exploring determinants of job satisfaction. *BMC Nurs* 2023;22:461.
3. Aranda S., Jefford M., Yates P., et al. Impact of a novel nurse-led prechemotherapy education intervention (ChemoEd) on patient distress, symptom burden, and treatment-related information and support needs: Results from a randomised, controlled trial. *Ann. Oncol.* 2012;23:222-231.