

# Cancer Nursing in the Digital Era



Digital health technologies offer the promise of improving clinical outcomes, utility, and sustainability of the Australian healthcare system. Technology is changing health system information, data collection, communication, and clinical care. The recently released Australian Cancer Plan emphasised the need to embrace and expand access to digitally enabled cancer care as a priority.<sup>1</sup>

Australia's National Digital Health Strategy highlights the need for workforce training and support to enable the safe, seamless, and secure implementation of digital health technologies.<sup>2</sup> Cancer nurses will have an important role in the implementation, and in educating and informing patients about how technology is being used to deliver optimal health outcomes.

The **CNSA Nursing Workforce Survey 2022** revealed that cancer nurses are aware of the increasing importance of technology in the workplace and foresee challenges in its implementation.<sup>3</sup>



## 44% of cancer nurses

think the integration of digital health technologies (e.g., telehealth and electronic medical records) is a current challenge in their workplace.<sup>3</sup>

Cancer nurses surveyed in the **CNSA Nursing Workforce Survey 2022**, reported concerns about how digital health technologies will impact the workforce.<sup>3</sup>

“  
*Hopefully, technology will not get the better of us and that we can look after the patient as best we can.*  
”

“  
*[Important that the] workforce is growing quick enough for evolving treatments and technologies.*  
”

“  
*The increasing levels of technology is creating a level of depersonalisation.*  
”

To respond to these challenges and prepare for the future, cancer nursing will need to transform into a digitally enabled profession to effectively support health technology integration.

## How technology is transforming the workplace

There are many examples of how digital technologies are already benefitting nursing practice and education.<sup>4</sup> Opportunities exist for nurse-led research to develop technology-enabled interventions, including virtual consultations. Overall, cancer nurses are hopeful that in the next 10 years, technology will improve equity of access and patient outcomes, specifically in nurse-led research and development of new treatments along with telehealth-enabled virtual consultations.<sup>3</sup>

### How is technology changing clinical care and outcomes?

Comments from cancer nurses surveyed in the **CNSA Nursing Workforce Survey 2022**.<sup>3</sup>



*Increased numbers of people living with and surviving cancer due to the progression in new cancer treatment technologies.*



*I see cancer nursing integrating technology and virtual consultations. I see integration of services including inter-hospital integration where a rural patient can receive treatment and follow up seamlessly.*



*Highly specialised, new therapies and technology providing greater treatment options.*



*A digitalised workforce working across the system/pathways of care unbounded by physical location.*



*Providing innovative nurse led models of care. Utilising IT and telehealth to provide individualised care to patients with cancer.*



### How is technology changing nurse education?

Comments from cancer nurses surveyed in the **CNSA Nursing Workforce Survey 2022**.<sup>3</sup>



*Digital technology...will have impacts that will see a flourishing of nursing research leading to only better outcomes for all.*



*Opportunity for online in-services, ability to be connected inter-hospital with cancer centres.*



*More availability to the regional/rural practitioners to attend conferences/ education...use of the virtual setting for future events.*



For more information on the **Cancer Nursing Workforce Survey** visit:  
<https://bmcnurs.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12912-023-01629-7>

The CNSA is focused on supporting cancer nurses to enable workforce digital health transformation, if you want to learn more, contact [Jemma@cnsa.org.au](mailto:Jemma@cnsa.org.au).

#### REFERENCES

1. Australian Government. Cancer Australia. Australian Cancer Plan. Available at: <https://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/australian-cancer-plan>.
2. Australia's National Digital Health Strategy. Available at: <https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/national-digital-health-strategy-2023-2028.pdf> CNSA Cancer Nursing Workforce Survey 2022. Full Report Published 2023.
3. Krick T, et al. BMC Health Serv Res 2019;19:400. doi:10.1186/s12913-019-4238-3 PMID:31221133.