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Patient Education is Key in Role of Oncology Nurses at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey
Research on How to Best Educate Patients in a Fast-Paced Environment Touted at Annual Conference

New Brunswick, N.J., May 12, 2008 – Today’s nursing profession consists of more than just bandages and blood pressure. Oncology nurses, especially, play a unique role in patient care, which includes a heavy focus on research and patient education. These subjects will receive much attention, as nurses from The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ) will present their latest research findings through presentations and poster sessions at the Oncology Nursing Society’s 33rd Annual Congress being held in Philadelphia later this week (May 15 – 18). CINJ is a Center of Excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Among this year’s poster presentations is one focusing on the development of a self-directed learning module for dealing with patient education time constraints. The team, which includes CINJ Oncology Education Specialist Leah Scaramuzzo, MSN, RN, C, AOCN and Jayne Camporeale, RN, MSN, APN-C, looked at how to best educate patients on radiation-specific side effects in a fast-paced environment, by creating a narrative slide show for patients and their families. The self-learning module discusses radiation treatment in general, anticipated side effects, roles of the healthcare team and other vital information. The program can be accessed via the Internet or other means, thus allowing the patient and family to review at their own pace.

Scaramuzzo notes the program is beneficial to all, “Oncology nurses are in a vital position to enhance patient teaching by developing self-learning modules such as this one. Evidence demonstrates that such information empowers a patient’s decision-making process, thus facilitates active participation in their healthcare.”

The program is currently being pilot-tested, with a Spanish-language version under development. The module also is being adapted for new surgical patients and for those entering CINJ’s survivorship program.

As the cancer survivorship population continues to grow, CINJ nurses also will highlight the role of the Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) in the care of these patients. Lead author Janet Gordils-Perez, RN, MA, APN-C who is the director of oncology nursing for CINJ’s Treatment Area, will discuss CINJ’s “Bridge Program: Transitions for Cancer Survivors,” a model, which was designed by APN’s to look at a cancer survivor’s unique needs.

Upon entering the program, comprehensive patient information is collected and catalogued. It is through this process that APN’s are able to identify specific patient needs in order to explore and provide tailor-made services in the areas of physical, psychological and social care. For instance, specialists in areas such as cardiology and sexual dysfunction are continually identified by APN’s so that necessary referrals can be made. The research team -- which also includes CINJ nurses Judith K. Much, RN, MA; Marlene McGuire, RN, MA, APN; Scaramuzzo; and Chief Nursing Officer, Regina S. Cunningham, PhD, RN, AOCN, who also is an assistant professor of family medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical

School -- notes such programs are essential to meeting the evolving needs of cancer survivors and to ensure the delivery of quality service to them.

Another focus of patient education is the development of an orientation program for those receiving a bone marrow transplant (BMT). Tracy Krimmel, RN, MSN, and Scaramuzzo will present the poster session. Their research looked at the lack of patient information generally available in this area and the need to develop a comprehensive curriculum for patients including information on types of transplants, conditioning regimens, side effects, and survivorship issues among many others.

Since January, BMT patients at CINJ have been required to attend a class at which they are given a resource book containing the latest information. The team notes that while awareness has been raised among national organizations about the lack of multi-media educational materials on this subject, the work on the CINJ BMT orientation program promotes effective and efficient use of limited resources.

As the nursing staff at the only National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center in the state, CINJ nurses also participate in the training of oncology nurses at CINJ's Partner and Affiliate hospitals. They also will be responsible for playing a vital role in each of the 80,000 patient visits expected at the facility this year.

About The Cancer Institute of New Jersey

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is the state's first and only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, and is dedicated to improving the prevention, detection, treatment and care of patients with cancer. CINJ's physician-scientists engage in translational research, transforming their laboratory discoveries into clinical practice quite literally bringing research to life. The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is a center of excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. To support CINJ, please call the Cancer Institute of New Jersey Foundation at 1-888-333-CINJ.

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Network is comprised of hospitals throughout the state and provides a mechanism to rapidly disseminate important discoveries into the community. Partner Hospital: Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Affiliate Hospitals: Bayshore Community Hospital, CentraState Healthcare System, Cooper University Hospital*, Jersey Shore University Medical Center, JFK Medical Center, Morristown Memorial Hospital, Overlook Hospital, Raritan Bay Medical Center, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital at Hamilton (CINJ-Hamilton), Saint Peter's University Hospital, Somerset Medical Center, Southern Ocean County Hospital, The University Hospital/UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School*, and University Medical Center at Princeton. *Academic Affiliate

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