

Nursing PD Pathways

- Nurses play a key role in the care and support of patients with cancer across the continuum of patient care.
- All nurses, regardless of practice setting, are likely to have contact with people affected by cancer and will therefore require some level of capability in cancer control. Some nurses will, however, require specialised and advanced competencies in cancer control, as their practice requires them to respond to the particular health and support needs of people affected by cancer.
- Specialising may involve:
 - specialising in the care of patients with a particular type of cancer
 - specialising in a particular aspect of cancer care, such as palliative care or delivery of chemotherapy
 - involvement in clinical trials
 - work as a nurse practitioner
 - specialising in service improvement.
- [Find out](#) how some Australian nurses have developed their careers in a range of settings.
- Professional development requirements for individual nurses will depend on their roles and career goals.

[EdCaN National Education Framework for Cancer Nursing](#) highlights the potential role of all nurses in cancer control and identifies different levels of cancer practice ¹

Who	What	Knowledge / skills required
All nurses	Will come in contact with people affected by cancer	Demonstrate core capabilities in cancer control
Many nurses	Will participate more frequently or for short intensive periods in the care of people affected by cancer	Require access to further education in areas of specialist cancer control with a direct application to their role
Some nurses	Will choose to become specialists in cancer control	Achievement of Specialist Cancer Nurse competency standards would normally require further education in cancer control at postgraduate level
Few nurses	Will become competent and authorised to practice in an advanced and/or extended role in cancer control	These nurses will build on the capabilities of the specialist cancer nurse through additional experience and education at the Masters level or equivalent

Typical learning experiences that will contribute to the development of the required level of competence in cancer control can include:

- actual or simulated practice situations involving working with people affected by cancer, where reflection and learning from practice experiences is facilitated
- structured learning experiences, including cancer control learning activities in entry to practice programs, continuing professional development programs relevant to cancer control, or postgraduate specialist cancer nursing courses
- ongoing learning about current practices and new advances in cancer control through activities such as reviewing research developments, participating in continuous improvement activities, or participating in professional meetings.

A range of grants and fellowships are available to nurses to support professional development activities.

1. Aranda S, Yates P. [A national professional development framework for cancer nursing](#). 2nd edn. Canberra: The National Cancer Nursing Education Project (EdCaN), Cancer Australia; 2009.

Where are you in your career?

▶ New to cancer care

If you are new to cancer care, you will probably want to start with activities that will provide you with general information about cancer, its diagnosis and treatment. Gaining experience in a broad range of areas may help you not only in your understanding of the needs of patients with cancer but also in your decisions about future career directions.

Tips from Nurses

► Find a mentor

A mentor is a colleague who can provide you with individual advice, feedback and support. Mentors can be a great source of encouragement and inspiration. [Click here](#) for tips on finding a mentor.

"You need a mentor. Someone that you respect and can have a relationship with and will support you but also take you to the places that you need to go. Who will go to cancer nursing meetings with you and go to conferences with you – not to hold your hand but to introduce you to other people who are doing similar or interesting work and can open doors for you."

(Beth, Lung Cancer Nurse Coordinator, NSW)

"The most important thing for me would be to find a local mentor. Find somebody that they feel inspired by, that they feel they'll get good objective feedback and advice from.... They're often not people that declare themselves. I think that some of the best mentors I had were fairly unassuming people, weren't necessarily people who were out there shouting their own worth. And it may not necessarily be people in cancer care, maybe not even in nursing, but often people who just will challenge an individual's own boundaries professionally and help them open some of those boundaries up and believe that you know they might be able to do more than they thought they could even in the environment that they currently work in."

(Meg, Cancer Nurse Coordinator, WA)

► Working in different cancer environments

Exposure to a range of areas and service delivery settings can be helpful in providing you with experience in caring for different individuals/families living with cancer, for example, oncology wards, chemotherapy wards, palliative care etc.

"It's essential to get a broad range of exposure to different areas of care. To be able to support your patients confidently, you have to know. You have to have a good broad knowledge."

(Beth, Lung Cancer Nurse Coordinator)

"There are so many experiences to be had in cancer nursing – it's not just the patient care aspect of things in the inpatient setting. There's lots of supportive care in outpatients, there's palliative care, there's, you know very technical nursing in bone marrow transplant units. You don't have to be trapped into thinking that you're only going to be giving chemo or only doing palliative care. You can choose now and specialise."

(Sally, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Clinical Services Improvement, QL)

"There are groups looking currently at some sort of basic certification course but by far the best way is to get in and have a go."

(Chris, Research Nurse, NSW)

► Self-directed learning on cancer terminology

Options may include cancer text books, cancer nursing journals and cancer websites. Ask others what they have found helpful.

Good introductory websites include:

- National Cancer Institute 'Understanding Cancer Series' <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics>
- MacMillan Cancer Support
<http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/Aboutcancer/AboutcancerHome.aspx>

For more information, [click here](#).

"I'm constantly getting something for patients so if something throws me I'll look it up. Or I'll be researching something for a talk and I'll put something into Google and go from there."

(Beth, Lung Cancer Nurse Coordinator)

"If I was going, for example, to do the CNC of palliative care, because I knew a bit about palliative care but not enough, I did heaps of pre-reading, I exposed myself to as much of that before I got to the job and then I felt I was a little bit more up to speed when I got there and then of course learned more while I was there."

(Sally, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Clinical Services Improvement, QLD)

"And the best thing I've discovered is don't leave something hanging. If you come across something you're wondering about, find out about it now and being able just to jump online straight away and find an answer to

your question is probably one of the most important things in this job I reckon."
(Chris, Research Nurse, NSW)

▶ **Introductory workshops/seminars**

Workshops and seminars may be available through a range of avenues. Ask colleagues about local talks being given in your hospital or local area. Specific cancer organisations and not-for-profit bodies, such as Regional Groups of the Cancer Nurses Society of Australia (CNSA), The Cancer Council, The Leukaemia Foundation and others in each state and territory, often run workshops and seminars on a range of cancer topics.

For more information, [click here](#).

"So I joined the Oncology Nurses Group which is a Queensland professional body that's run through the Cancer Council here and that meant that I got regular journals and they also have a yearly conference which is relatively cheap and it's in Queensland and then the hospital also ran its own conferences – they were really small, cancer care ones – but I started to present things. It wasn't ground-breaking research but things like discharging patients from hospital – the experience I'd had trying to get cancer patients out to the community."

(Sally, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Clinical Services Improvement, QLD)

"And there are courses that are formal through universities and also informal through Cancer Council and CNSA, eViQ's got great things that you can do short stuff online, all of that, EdCan's coming, so you can actually take your time and develop – the resources are more available than they used to be....the resources are there and you can do whatever you like really – be really flexible."

(Sally, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Clinical Services Improvement, QLD)

"And the best thing I've discovered is don't leave something hanging. If you come across something you're wondering about, find out about it now and being able just to jump online straight away and find an answer to your question is probably one of the most important things in this job I reckon."

(Chris, Research Nurse, NSW)

▶ **Use your colleagues**

Multidisciplinary care is becoming a fundamental part of the delivery of best practice in cancer care. The multidisciplinary team can be a valuable source of information, and being a member of a team can provide ongoing learning opportunities.

To access the Cancer Learning Multidisciplinary Toolkit, [click here](#).

"Being part of multidisciplinary meetings. So say for example the radiologist puts up the CT scans and X-rays. You're constantly learning, you're constantly learning to look. It's being part of everything that's going on."

(Beth, Lung Cancer Nurse Coordinator NSW)

"With this job, coming on board and learning on the job, you really have to use your colleagues to learn so people who get into this kind of job one-out are going to find it very difficult if they're trying to learn on the job. Just having someone of whom you can ask a question if you need to is really really important."

(Chris, Research Nurse, NSW)

"I've got access to a couple of really good doctors who if you're not sure they're really happy to help. Which is really good. Along the way there's always been someone who's been really good in doing that."

(Sonya, Data Manager, SA)

▶ **Interest groups and organisations**

Involvement in local, state-based, national or international networks or special interest groups can be a valuable source of information and ongoing learning. Ask colleagues about local groups.

For more information about national and international groups, [click here](#).

"I'm a big believer in opportunities for networking and sharing information in a much more informal way through the likes of conference attendance and certainly the CNSA conference, particularly for up and coming cancer nurses or those fairly new into cancer nursing I think it's a fabulous forum for people to be inspired, to see what other nurses around the country are doing to start to learn and develop their own ideas and that's certainly something that I think is invaluable but again is growing in terms of the culture of nursing."

(Meg, Cancer Nurse Coordinator, WA)

▶ **Taking the next step**

If you are considering working in a specialised cancer role, you will benefit from training in the particular areas of care you will be involved in. This may involve undertaking short courses on specific aspects of cancer care (eg breast care nursing) or participation in a practicum or other work-based training program. If you are providing a specific cancer therapy (eg chemotherapy, radiotherapy), there are courses that are specifically designed to help

you learn about providing these in a safe environment.

You may decide to do a postgraduate qualification in your particular area of interest.

Tips from Nurses

▶ Networks and groups

Involvement in local, state-based, national or international networks or special interest groups can be a valuable source of information and ongoing learning. Ask colleagues about local groups.

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[in relation to being on the CNSA Executive] "And over the last 4 years it has really opened up my awareness of the level and the strategic potential that cancer nurses have to effect change and to improve both patient outcomes as well as nursing conditions, recruitment, education and those sorts of things."

(Meg, Cancer Nurse Coordinator, WA)

▶ Conferences

Attendance at relevant state-based, national or international conferences provides great learning experiences as well opportunities to meet other people and start building networks.

For conference listings, [click here](#).

"...I think that the effect of the inspiration that you get from a conference is often fairly long-lasting, particularly early in your career. Some of the conferences I attended early in my career I felt a professional high off for up to 6 months at a time."

(Meg, Cancer Nurse Coordinator, WA)

"There are so many experiences to be had in cancer nursing – it's not just the patient care aspect of things in the inpatient setting. There's lots of supportive care in outpatients, there's palliative care, there's, you know very technical nursing in bone marrow transplant units. You don't have to be trapped into thinking that you're only going to be giving chemo or only doing palliative care. You can choose now and specialise."

(Sally, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Clinical Services Improvement, QL)

"There are groups looking currently at some sort of basic certification course but by far the best way is to get in and have a go."

(Chris, Research Nurse, NSW)

▶ Ask questions

Asking questions and challenging accepted approaches, even though it may push you outside your comfort zone, can be a great way to learn and progress and to develop yourself both professionally and personally.

"Technology is actually developing in leaps and bounds and our ability to keep up with the skills and knowledge needs to match it and we need to have somewhere that's going to give us that information really quickly because journals are not fast enough any more and nurses are curious about things and we no longer just do what we're told and give drugs like we're told, we question and we want to know how and why it works so we can support patients and their families and that's probably something that's really wonderful about undergraduate nursing courses is that they do teach you to question and to communicate with patients and their families and that's something that once you've finished your undergraduate course unless you chase that aspect of nursing learning, you don't ever go there again. Because you very much focus on the technology and the treatment and those sorts of things so that is a bit of a shame because the professional side of nursing is the bit that makes you develop up the career ladder..."

(Sally, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Clinical Services Improvement, QLD)

"Certainly finishing that degree I can very much see it changed how I thought about my clinical practice and it gave me the confidence and I guess really the imperative to challenge what I did daily and certainly to look at practice wherever I worked and question 'Is this the best way we can do it, are we getting the best outcomes? And is it the best for us as nurses?'"

(Meg, Cancer Nurse Coordinator, WA)

"And the best thing I've discovered is don't leave something hanging. If you come across something you're wondering about, find out about it now and being able just to jump online straight away and find an answer to your question is probably one of the most important things in this job I reckon."

(Chris, Research Nurse, NSW)

▶ Workshops and short courses

For more information about cancer-specific workshops and courses, [click here](#).

Individuals working in clinical research are likely to be invited to attend start-up meetings or investigator meetings at which information about the trial and the protocol will be provided. [Short courses on clinical trials management and good clinical practice](#) can be very valuable to provide an overview of the trials process.

"Most of it's self-directed and on the job. There are journal articles, there are texts, a lot of online information these days, conferences... You learn things through the professional organisations and committee work in those. You learn trial-specific information through start-up meetings and through the paperwork that comes for each clinical trial."

(Chris, Research Nurse, NSW)

"Do a clinical trials training course as soon as you can. Look at what other areas you need – it will depend on what trials you're going to do and what experience you have. If you can get into a clinical trials training course it all just makes more sense."

(Sonya, Data Manager, SA)

"And the best thing I've discovered is don't leave something hanging. If you come across something you're wondering about, find out about it now and being able just to jump online straight away and find an answer to your question is probably one of the most important things in this job I reckon."

(Chris, Research Nurse, NSW)

▶ Postgraduate qualifications

Relevant postgraduate qualifications, such as a graduate certificate or diploma in cancer nursing can be a valuable way to find out more about particular areas of care and will help you in your career progression.

"When I first left my undergraduate degree in '89 I vowed I would never go back to university again and it was a full 10 years before I did actually re-enrol in something and I really had a sense that I was ready to challenge myself academically but at that stage I didn't really know what I was going to get out of it. I don't think I went into it thinking 'what will I get out of this' but I just needed something to stimulate me at that stage."

(Meg, Cancer Nurse Coordinator, WA)

▶ Self-directed learning

A range of sources of information are available including websites, journals, textbooks, and interactive CD-ROMs. Clinical practice guidelines are available for a range of cancer types. For more information, [click here](#).

"I also found in my recent work, the NHS website – wonderful – their cancer stuff is fabulous – they've done it all. It may not all be applicable for here but they've got tools for nurses and tools for allied health and lots of articles and links to lots of places so that was helpful."

(Sally, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Clinical Services Improvement, QLD)

*"There's two things, you've got the general needs of the position – so the nursing issues, data management issues, general broad issues, like good clinical practice, that type of thing. And then there are the trial specific or tumour stream specific training needs. And probably the people who are looking at the general certification courses are looking at the general needs of the position. You're always going to have to do some of that trial-specific or tumour stream specific training off your own bat. You know you're going to have to go and look it up and self-direct your learning. And it's not really hard to do these days with med access but you've just got to have the access." **(Chris, Research Nurse, NSW)***

▶ General skills

In addition to your cancer skills and knowledge, you may also identify other general skills that will help you in your role. Training may include communication skills training or presentation skills training.

For more information, [click here](#).

An important aspect of training for all nurses is self-care – learning to look after yourself in order to care for others. To access a list of self-care resources, [click here](#).

"Work out what's good to ensure your wellbeing. Whether that's going to the pub and unwinding with friends, having a massage, debriefing, or clinical supervision. Work out what works for you so you can stay. There are lots of forms but that's a must. It will change over time. Often people say 'you leave home at home and you leave work at work'. But often what you've been through during the day with someone is really distressing and there isn't an off switch. Often there are people you really identify strongly with and you're really moved by their situation or you're really sad. To have permission to cry is very important"

(Beth, Lung Cancer Nurse Coordinator)

▶ Advanced Practice

If you are working at or considering moving into an advanced role in cancer care, your professional development needs will be more specific.

Tips from Nurses

▶ Research projects

Nursing research is an emerging area. Talk to other senior nurses in your area or contact cancer nursing organisations to find out more.

▶ Conferences

Giving presentations at national and international conferences can help you learn while also sharing knowledge with others. Being involved in the organising committees for conferences can be rewarding and can help you develop new networks.

For conference listings, [click here](#).

"I've done presentations. I did one at ARDMA a couple of years ago and I also did the same one in Canada, I went to the NCIC meeting, the spring meeting over there. I was actually quite lucky to go. It's not often we get to do ones like that in our area because we don't have a lot of industry trials."

(Sonya, Data Manager, SA)

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(Sally, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Clinical Services Improvement, QL)

"There are groups looking currently at some sort of basic certification course but by far the best way is to get in and have a go."

(Chris, Research Nurse, NSW)

▶ Postgraduate qualifications

Relevant postgraduate qualifications, such as a Masters degree can be a valuable way to develop your skills in an area of interest to you. A Masters can help you focus on a particular aspect of cancer management or help you develop your research or leadership skills.

For a list of oncology-specific postgraduate nursing courses, [click here](#).

"Technology is actually developing in leaps and bounds and our ability to keep up with the skills and knowledge needs to match it and we need to have somewhere that's going to give us that information really quickly because journals are not fast enough any more and nurses are curious about things and we no longer just do what we're told and give drugs like we're told, we question and we want to know how and why it works so we can support patients and their families and that's probably something that's really wonderful about undergraduate nursing courses is that they do teach you to question and to communicate with patients and their families and that's something that once you've finished your undergraduate course unless you chase that aspect of nursing learning, you don't ever go there again. Because you very much focus on the technology and the treatment and those sorts of things so that is a bit of a shame because the professional side of nursing is the bit that makes you develop up the career ladder..."

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(Meg, Cancer Nurse Coordinator, WA)

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(Chris, Research Nurse, NSW)

▶ Leadership and mentoring skills

In addition to your cancer skills and knowledge, you may also identify other general skills that will help you in your role.

For more information, [click here](#).

"It's something that now people at my level are very aware of and we recognise that we really need to step up and be role models. There's a core group of us that are constantly teaching, and constantly have nurses at different levels with us."

(Beth, Lung Cancer Nurse Coordinator)

*"I did my Certificate IV in workplace training and assessment. And that was really important because whilst I think some nurses are natural teachers and leaders it actually clarifies your goals in developing educational resources in that you can do competency based assessments based on national standards."***(Sally, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Clinical Services Improvement, QLD)**

*"It wasn't until I had actually undertaken a postgraduate course that I realised that it wasn't just what I learned but how it made me think about things and it really has changed how I think about things and how broadly I push the scope of what I think of things so it isn't just about looking at practice where I work and what I do and being aware of what happens in the setting that I'm working in but looking beyond that to subspecialties and the rest of cancer nursing rather than just the field that I'm working in and seeing what can be borrowed from those fields."***(Meg, Cancer Nurse Coordinator, WA)**

▶ Case Studies

▶ Beth Ivey, NSW

Role	Lung cancer nurse coordinator (Hospital-based role, Metropolitan setting)
Links	Strong links with the community, palliative care, surgery, radiation oncology and medical oncology
Pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Started in haematology and oncology as a ward nurse newly registered nurse ▶ Transferred into oncology ▶ Worked in different areas of oncology nursing <p><i>I became an oncology nurse in a team, and worked in clinics and in the wards giving chemotherapy, I worked in palliative care for a while, I was in charge of the oncology ward."</i></p>
Training and courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Counselling courses ▶ Oncology course at the College of Nursing ▶ Bachelor of Nursing <p><i>"I have to keep up to date with chemotherapy. I have to know about clinical trials that are going on. The one thing that I will always refer is palliative care because it's become such a strong speciality on its own. I can still provide support but it's not something I would consider myself an expert in. You have to let things go a bit but also have a really good grasp of as much as you can."</i></p>
Group and networks	<p>Member of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ COSA ▶ CNSA ▶ NSW Oncology Group – Lung Cancer ▶ Australian Lung Foundation
What helps?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reading ▶ Having a mentor ▶ Being a member of relevant societies/organisations/groups ▶ Attending meetings and conferences ▶ Involvement in conference organising committees ▶ Being part of many systems

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in a public teaching hospital Being part of multidisciplinary meetings <p><i>"I'm constantly getting something for patients so if something throws me I'll look it up. Or I'll be researching something for a talk and I'll put something into Google and go from there."</i></p>
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▶ Sally Jones, QLD

Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical Nurse Consultant, Clinical Services Improvement Role sits in Cancer Care Services at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Non-clinical role – no patient contact Responsible for improving patient care through implementation of evidence-based treatment, service improvement, planning for the future Acts as a change agent
Pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduated as a mature age student in 1995 First 12 months as a graduate nurse in oncology Clinical Nurse Consultant role Range of roles in inpatient and outpatient settings to gain experience Acting Nurse Unit Manager Change agent project work Change agent permanent role <p><i>"I just went after every experience I could that was coming up around me and where it didn't I created the opportunity."</i></p>
Training and courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate Certificate in Cancer Care (part time, external course) Range of courses and workshops Transition package offered through Queensland Health for people moving into cancer care (modular format) Certificate IV in workplace training and assessment Currently looking at Masters in Health Leadership <p><i>"Within the first 6 months I was already starting to look around for something that was going to develop me outside my working practice and I thought the more exposure I got to what was going on in the world of cancer the better. So I started looking at things like the Red Cross offered visiting sessions and a half day course on grief and loss and then they had a music therapist come and they were 2-hour afternoon sessions that were free and you could just go along and I went to those on my days off."</i></p>
Group and networks	<p>Member of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CNSA Oncology Nurses Group (Queensland) RCNA
What helps?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Being a member of relevant societies/organisations/groups Attending meetings and conferences Networking and talking to others

▶ Meg Plaster, WA

Role	Cancer Nurse Coordinator, Adolescents and Young Adults
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role is focused on psychosocial support, age-appropriate psychosocial assessment as well as care coordination • Predominantly outpatient setting, some inpatient work with telephone follow-up and community liaison
Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works as part of a team of 10 other cancer nurse coordinators in the metropolitan area of Perth and linking in with 7 other regional cancer nurse coordinators • Strong links with services that are appropriate to meet the needs of young people with cancer
Pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Started in oncology by accident but loved it and stayed! • Moved to UK and did Cancer Nursing Degree at Royal Marsden Hospital • Worked to gain experience in oncology and haematology fields • Returned to Australia • Moved into paediatric oncology as an educator • Manager of paediatric oncology unit • Cancer Care Coordinator role started in 2006 <p><i>"Certainly my experience in London was fairly fundamental to how think about nursing and definitely cancer nursing now. The number of hospitals and the throughput of staff in London hospitals and certainly London cancer hospitals and cancer units is significant. And that turnover whilst it sounds like a nasty thing is actually really positive and really feeds a very healthy turnover of knowledge and just an acceptance of challenging things that have always been done in a certain way and people are just not threatened by new ideas being raised and existing practice being challenged. So that really paved the way for me for a cultural acceptance of asking questions and raising questions about what we do and why we do it and is this the best way?"</i></p>
Training and courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancer Nursing Degree in UK • Currently doing a Master of Nursing by Research (evaluating the needs of adolescents and young adults with cancer)
Group and networks	<p>Member of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNSA (regional group and Executive member of national committee)
What helps?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a mentor • Reading • Being a member of relevant societies/organisations/groups • Attending meetings and conferences • Involvement in CNSA executive • Asking questions – challenging accepted doctrines <p><i>"The first manager in London – his parting words to me were 'choose your place of work, don't just choose the job, and find a place of work with a culture and with somebody in it who inspires you to do things and to challenge things and to feel that they're going to embrace some of that."</i></p> <p><i>"They were very much people that were there by default but I guess over time – some of them I didn't recognise as being the mentors and significant influencers in my career until afterwards when I reflected on what I learned from them and what they stimulated in me in terms of wanting to do things in my career. I probably came to appreciate on reflection."</i></p>

Role	<p>Research Nurse, Rural private hospital, All cancer types</p> <p><i>"So because it's a regional practice it draws pretty much all the cancer patients from a reasonably sized geographic area so we get all types of cancers. For some of the more specialised things such as haematology, people might go off to a larger centre for review and for some procedures but a lot of the basic treatment is still given here. So we do clinical trials in most of the cancer streams. We would usually have somewhere around 30 clinical trials open at any one time and of course we've got heaps of people in follow up from the 140 clinical trials this place has been involved in since the late '90's."</i></p>
Links	<p>One of a team of 5 research nurses</p>
Pathway	<p>Has been nursing since 1970 in a fairly broad range of settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Started in psychiatric nursing • General nursing • Midwifery • Smaller rural hospital roles/rural base hospitals • 19 years in nursing and hospital management • Acute nursing <p>Current job appealed from a couple of perspectives – looked interesting, hadn't done it before and hours were good.</p> <p><i>"The thing I suppose that's most interesting about the job is there's something new all the time. And so when you come into it you're on a continual learning curve. Because there are new drugs on the market, there are new clinical trials of those drugs, as I say in the various different tumour streams. So you are continually learning and I'd never intended being in the job for 5 years which I have been. I'd wanted after so long in the system to move around a bit and do other interesting things. But this has maintained my interest for that long."</i></p>
Training and courses	<p>On-the-job training and self-directed learning has been the key</p>
Group and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial-specific groups • CNSA • COSA
What helps?	<p>Sources of information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharmaceutical company websites for information about drugs • Cancer-specific websites • Conferences, collective groups and pharmaceutical company training • Investigator meetings to discuss trial and protocol • Cancer-specific conferences <p>Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask colleagues • Good computer access is essential for the clinical research role – especially in a regional or rural area <p><i>"With this job, coming on board and learning on the job, you really have to use your colleagues to learn so people who get into this kind of job one-out are going to find it very difficult if they're trying to learn on the job. Just having someone of whom you can ask a question if you need to is really really important."</i></p> <p><i>"The set up needs to involve the use of a computer on broadband. And you can't do it time-sharing. You need to be able to use your computer all the time if you're going to be involved in this sort of work. And a lot of the work is becoming web-based now anyway."</i></p>

	<p><i>So filling out the case report forms for example is now done on weblink."</i></p> <p><i>"Being in a regional area – we're lucky, we've got two universities in Albury-Wodonga so there are libraries available but there would be other places that don't have the sort of facilities that we've got where things would be next to impossible if you didn't have access to web-based information."</i></p>
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► Sonya Stephens, SA

Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Manager, Radiation oncology, Royal Adelaide Hospital • Trial centre coordinator for a multicentre international trial; trial coordinator for other trials • Range of cancer types
Pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse training 20 years ago • Outpatients role • Administrative nursing roles • Moved to haematology trials • Moved to radiation oncology trials
Training and courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short courses in clinical trials management through Quintiles and NHMRC • Graduate Certificate in Clinical Trials Management (distance learning) • Planning to do Masters in Clinical Trials Management
Group and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARDMA • TROG
What helps?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending conferences • Asking colleagues • Journal of Clinical Research Best Practice <p>Useful websites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALLG • Clinical Trials Registry • FDA website • National Cancer Institute website – Cancer Clinical Trials: a basic workbook <p><i>"Don't throw out your books. Especially anatomy and physiology and things like that – they always come in handy!"</i></p>

Conference/Event Listings

► Australian

CNSA http://www.cnsa.org.au/CNSA_Winter_conference.htm

HSANZ <http://www.hsanz.org.au/news/events.cfm>

RCNA http://www.rcna.org.au/development/development_events

COSA <http://www.cosa.org.au/asm.html>

Cancer Council Australia (and state/territory groups) <http://www.cancer.org.au/Home.htm>

National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre <http://www.nbocc.org.au/our-organisation/news-and-events/news-events>

Organisations and networks

▶ Australian

CNSA – Cancer Nursing Society of Australia <http://www.cnsa.org.au/>

The peak national body for cancer nurses in Australia, CNSA is the nursing group within the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia (COSA) while maintaining its status as an independent body for cancer nurses in Australia. CNSA is committed to achieving and promoting excellence in cancer care through the professional contributions of nurses. There are professional updates held in each state by the regional groups.

COSA – Clinical Oncological Society of Australia <http://www.cosa.org.au/>

COSA is Australia's peak national body representing health professionals whose main work is cancer control.

Oncology Nurses Group

http://www.cancerqld.org.au/page/need_support/education_programs/Oncology_Nurses_Group/

For nurses in Queensland the Oncology Nurses Group is a state wide body that operates under the auspices and sponsorship of The Cancer Council Queensland. As a state-wide body, the group is composed of Oncology Nurses Groups located in urban and rural centres throughout Queensland.

HSANZ Nurses Group – Haematological Society of Australia & New Zealand

<http://www.hsanz.org.au/news/HSANZ-NG.cfm>

Group for specialist haematology nurses from Australia and New Zealand formed under the umbrella of the HSANZ. Aims to inform members of the most recent developments in haematology, and to advance knowledge and inspire continued professional development in haematology.

Australian Psychosocial Oncology Society <http://www.cosa.org.au/groups/psycho-oncology.html>

Membership is open to all members of COSA who are interested in the psychosocial care of patients with cancer and their families.

PoCoG – Psycho-oncology Cooperative Research Group <http://www.pocog.org.au/>

PoCoG is a member of the Cooperative Clinical Trials Groups of COSA. Membership is open to researchers and health professionals from Australia and New Zealand. PoCoG aims to improve capacity and facilitate a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to the conduct of large-scale, multi-centre psycho-oncology and supportive care research.

▶ International

ISNCC – International Society of Nurses in Cancer Care <http://www.isncc.org/>

ISNCC is the international voice of oncology nursing dedicated to the protection and preservation of health and the relief of cancer-related sickness through the provision of education, research and international networking opportunities among cancer nursing groups and individuals.

ONS – Oncology Nursing Society <http://ons.org/>

The ONS is a professional organisation of over 35,000 registered nurses and other healthcare providers dedicated to excellence in patient care, education, research, and administration in oncology nursing. It's also the largest professional oncology association in the world.

EHA – European Hematology Association <http://www.ehaweb.org/>

Provides opportunities for both professional and personal development in the growing specialty of haematology.

International Psycho-oncology Society <http://www.ipos-society.org/>

Created to foster international multidisciplinary communication about clinical, educational and research issues that relate to the subspecialty of psycho-oncology. Membership is open to individuals with a diversity of clinical and research backgrounds, including nurses.

Courses and workshops

▶ Postgraduate Qualifications

Postgraduate Qualifications

Many of the Postgraduate Certificates are recognised and provide credit towards a Postgraduate Diploma – however this needs to be checked at individual locations. This section lists postgraduate qualifications in cancer nursing. A range of other postgraduate qualifications are also available that may be relevant for you. Talk to colleagues or professional bodies for more information.

▶ Graduate Certificate

Typical entrance requirements:

- Bachelor of Nursing or a nursing certificate from a hospital-based program
- minimum of 1 year's postgraduate experience
- registered in the state/territory in which they practice
- expected to practice in cancer/palliative care setting for the duration of the course

Peter MacCallum/University of Melbourne

Post-graduate certificate in cancer or palliative care nursing

http://www.nursing.unimelb.edu.au/future_students/specialty_and_advanced_practice

The College of Nursing

Graduate certificate in cancer nursing

Graduate certificate in breast cancer nursing

http://www.nursing.edu.au/Online_Course/ShowCourseProfile.aspx?CourseID=582&CategoryID=1

La Trobe University

Graduate Certificate in Cancer Nursing – Distance Education (HCCN) (exit option one from Master of Nursing: Cancer and Palliative Care)

http://www.latrobe.edu.au/coursefinder/local/2011/Master-of-Nursing-%28Cancer_Palliative-Care%29.6442.html

Graduate Certificate in Breast Care Nursing (exit option one from Master of Breast Care Nursing)

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/coursefinder/local/2011/Master-of-Nursing-%28Breast-Care%29.6267.html>

Queensland University of Technology

Graduate Certificate in Cancer Nursing (NS31)

<http://www.hlth.qut.edu.au/nrs/study/postgrad/course-major.jsp?major-id=12556>

University of Sydney

Graduate certificate in Cancer and Haematology Nursing

http://sydney.edu.au/nursing/course_information/specialty_courses/cancer_haematology/cancer_haematology_certificate.shtml

The University of Notre Dame

Graduate Certificate in Oncology Nursing

<http://www.nd.edu.au/fremantle/courses/postgraduate/nursing/gcON.shtml>

Australian Catholic University

Graduate Certificate in Clinical Nursing (oncology)

<http://www.acu.edu.au/courses/>

▶ Graduate Diploma

Typical entrance requirements:

- Degree or diploma from a university or college or a nursing certificate from a hospital-based program
- Registered in the state/territory in which they practice.

La Trobe University

Graduate Diploma in Cancer Nursing –Distance Education (HCCN) (exit option two from Master of Nursing: Cancer and Palliative Care)

http://www.latrobe.edu.au/coursefinder/local/2011/Master-of-Nursing-%28Cancer_Palliative-Care%29.6442.html

Graduate Diploma in Breast Care Nursing (exit option two from Master of Breast Care Nursing)

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/coursefinder/local/2011/Master-of-Nursing-%28Breast-Care%29.6267.html>

University of Adelaide

Graduate diploma in nursing science (oncology nursing)

http://www.adelaide.edu.au/programfinder/2009/gdnsc_gdnsoncol.html

University of Melbourne / Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Postgraduate diploma in Nursing Practice (Cancer and Palliative Care)

<https://handbook.unimelb.edu.au/view/2009/J04-AA>

Queensland University of Technology

Graduate Diploma in Nursing (Cancer Nursing)

<http://www.hlth.qut.edu.au/nrs/study/postgrad/course-major.jsp?major-id=12555>

University of Technology of Sydney

Graduate Diploma in Nursing

http://datasearch2.uts.edu.au/nmh/courses-subjects/postgraduate-detail.cfm?spk_cd=C07044&spk_ver_no=3

University of Sydney

Graduate diploma in Cancer and Haematology Nursing

http://sydney.edu.au/nursing/course_information/specialty_courses/cancer_haematology/cancer_haematology_dip.shtml

Edith Cowan University

Diploma of Palliative Care

<http://www.ecu.edu.au/future-students/our-courses/view?id=M48>

The University of Notre Dame

Graduate Diploma in Haematology Nursing

<http://www.nd.edu.au/fremantle/courses/postgraduate/nursing/gdHN.shtml>

Graduate Diploma in Nursing (Oncology)

<http://www.nd.edu.au/fremantle/courses/postgraduate/nursing/gdHN.shtml>

► Masters

Typical entrance requirements:

Candidates seeking entry to the Master of Nursing are normally required to hold an undergraduate degree in nursing (or equivalent) at a grade point average of 5 or above. Alternatively, applicants may be admitted on the basis of relevant experience at the discretion of the Head of School of Nursing.

Edith Cowan University

Master of Clinical Nursing (oncology nursing)

<http://www.ecu.edu.au/future-students/our-courses/view?id=I52>

University of Ballarat

Master of Clinical Nursing Studies (Palliative Care stream)

<http://www.ballarat.edu.au/ProgramFinder/displayProgram.jsp?ID=346>

Queensland University of Technology

Master of Nursing (Cancer Nursing)

<http://www.hlth.qut.edu.au/nrs/study/postgrad/course-major.jsp?major-id=12554>

University of Melbourne

Master of Advanced Nursing Practice (Cancer Care)

http://www.nursing.unimelb.edu.au/future_students/specialty_and_advanced_practice/master_of_advanced_nursing_practice

University of Technology of Sydney

Master of Nursing

http://datasearch2.uts.edu.au/nmh/courses-subjects/postgraduate-detail.cfm?spk_cd=C04228&spk_ver_no=1

University of Sydney

Masters of Cancer and Haematology Nursing

http://sydney.edu.au/nursing/course_information/specialty_courses/cancer_haematology/cancer_haematology_m.shtml

University of Canberra

Master of Advanced Nursing Practice

<http://www.canberra.edu.au/courses-units/pgd/health/domestic-only/911aa>

The University of Notre Dame

Master of Nursing

<http://www.nd.edu.au/courses/index.shtml>

Australian Catholic University

Master of Nursing (Practice)

<http://www.acu.edu.au/courses/>

La Trobe University

Master of Nursing: Cancer and Palliative Care

http://www.latrobe.edu.au/coursefinder/local/2011/Master-of-Nursing-%28Cancer_Palliative-Care%29.6442.html

Master of Breast Care Nursing

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/coursefinder/local/2011/Master-of-Nursing-%28Breast-Care%29.6267.html>

▶ Other cancer-specific courses

There are a number of short courses available on-line, in the work setting, and delivered by private companies. When considering the course to undertake you may want to consider the following aspects.

Your objectives for wanting to do the course, for example:

- to improve your clinical skills, (consider a course that includes supervised clinical experience, eg PEPA)
- to expand knowledge (consider the specific areas of knowledge – does it relate to disease type, treatment type, the theory behind the treatment?)
- to find out the latest treatments or meet other clinicians in the same area (consider external conferences or workshops)
- to complete requirements for continuing professional development (CPD).

Criteria for assessing short courses

- Look at the names of the presenters, their qualifications, and publications – are they respected and known for the subject they are presenting?
- If there are a number of topics, are there a number of different presenters (it is unlikely that one person can be expert on all topics)?
- Consider the expertise of the organiser of the short course – are they clinicians, hospitals, companies such as drug or book companies?
- Consider the cost of the course – what does it include?
- Is there an assessment as part of the course? For any course to be recognised for prior learning there generally needs to be assessment of learning.
- If you need to complete the course for CPD does the course information indicate the number of points that are allocated for completion of the course? Is a certificate provided?
- Identify if there is a process for follow-up with lecturers if required following completion of the course.
- Does the course articulate to other courses?

▶ Breast Cancer

Cancer Council Victoria/La Trobe University Breast cancer disease entity in nursing practice

http://www.cancervic.org.au/breast_cancer_disease_entity_nursing

Breast Cancer Institute NSW Breast care nurse practicum through the College of Nursing

<http://www.nursing.edu.au/BCpracticum>

▶ Lung cancer

Cancer Council Victoria/La Trobe University/Austin & Repatriation Medical Centre Nursing School

Lung cancer nursing education

http://www.cancervic.org.au/nursing_people_with_lung_cancer_program

▶ Prostate cancer

Cancer Council Victoria/La Trobe University

Prostate care nursing education

http://www.cancervic.org.au/prostate_care_nurses

▶ Other short courses

Cancer Nursing Education Program

The Cancer Council Queensland

http://www.cancerqld.org.au/page/need_support/education_programs/cancer_nursing_education_programs

Course topics include palliative care, breast cancer nursing, prostate cancer nursing and contemporary cancer therapies.

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

- short course program (see PDF) <http://www.petermac.org/ShortCourseProgramNursingEducation/>
- graduate education program <http://www.petermac.org/NursingGraduates>
- postgraduate programs:

The College of Nursing

Distance education courses:

<http://www.nursing.edu.au/DistanceEd/>

- breast cancer nursing – interventions in breast cancer care
- breast cancer nursing – role of the nurse in the management of breast cancer care
- breast cancers
- chemotherapy and other systemic treatments in cancer care
- communication in cancer care

Continuing professional development:

<http://www.nursing.edu.au/CPDh/>

- short face-to-face courses of 1–5 days duration

Workplaces can negotiate with the College to have customised programs developed to suit the needs of a group.

WA Centre for Cancer & Palliative Care

Collaboration between Curtin University of Technology and Edith Cowan University that provides courses and a biennial cancer nursing research conference.

<http://www.supportiveandpalliativecare.org.au/>

▶ Clinical trials

Information about clinical trials and good clinical practice is available through a range of not-for-profit and commercial groups and organisations. Talk to colleagues about what they have found helpful. Some possible links are provided below.

NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre

<http://www.ctc.usyd.edu.au/education/education.htm>

ARCS Australia

<http://www.arcs.com.au/>

Quintiles

<http://www.clinicalresearch.com/Professionals/Pages/healthpro.aspx>

▶ Workshops and Seminars

The College of Nursing

<http://www.nursing.edu.au/CPDh/>

e.g. workshops on:

- breast cancer care

- current issues in chemotherapy
- supporting the end of life journey

The Cancer Council WA

Professional Development Program

<http://www.cancerwa.asn.au/professionals/>

The Cancer Council Queensland

Allied Health Professionals Oncology Group Forums

http://www.cancerqld.org.au/page/Need_support/Education_Programs/AHPOG

The Cancer Council Victoria

Short courses in Victoria on:

- BreastHealth
- Communication
- Sexuality and cancer
- Living with cancer facilitator education

http://www.cancervic.org.au/about-cancer/for-health-professionals/training_courses_and_education

Nursing Australia

Professional development courses and workshops in each state and territory organised by Nursing Australia (nursing agency)

<http://www.nursingaustralia.com/education.htm>

Self-directed learning

▶ Online resources

Self-directed learning resources that may be particularly valuable for cancer nurses are listed below. For a complete list of cancer resources [click here](#).

Cancer Learning

<http://www.cancerlearning.gov.au/>

Interactive learning modules on:

- Multidisciplinary care
- Psychosocial care
- Links to cancer education resources across a broad range of areas.

EdCaN learning resources

Case studies: http://www.cancerlearning.gov.au/edcan_resources/#/xml/module_3/casestudies/

Supporting modules:

- [The cancer journey and domains of specialist cancer nursing practice](#)
- [Population health concepts in cancer control](#)
- [The biology of cancer](#)
- [Cancer treatments:](#)
 - - Fundamentals of cancer surgery
 - - Fundamentals of radiotherapy for cancer
 - - Fundamentals of systemic cancer therapies
 - - Fundamentals of cancer biological and molecular targeted therapies
 - - Fundamentals of haematopoietic stem cell transplant
- [Supportive care](#)
- [Culture-centred approach in cancer control for Indigenous Australians](#)

The Cancer Council NSW

<http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/editorial.asp?pageid=671>

Resources on:

- Cancer awareness (for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers)
- Talking about sexuality, body image and cancer
- Managing cancer pain

Virtual Nursing Education

<http://www.virtualnursingeducation.com/>

Online educational modules; includes an Introduction to Cancer module

Clinician's Health Channel

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/clinicians/>

For health professionals in Victoria – provided by the Department of Human Services

CancerNursing.org

<http://www.cancernursing.org/index.asp>

UK-based online training resources

Oncology Nursing Society

<http://ons.org/ClinicalResources>

US-based online training resources

Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (PEPA)

<http://www.pepaeducation.com/Nurses/>

CareSearch

<http://www.caresearch.com.au/Caresearch/Default.aspx>

Cancer Learning listing of Clinical Practice Guidelines

http://www.cancerlearning.gov.au/find/evidtreat_rsrc.php

IPOS Core Curriculum

http://www.ipos-society.org/education/core_curriculum/core_curriculum.aspx

National Cancer Institute Office of Cancer Survivorship

<http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/ocs/index.html>

MacMillan Cancer Support

<http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Home.aspx>

British Columbia Cancer Agency

<http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/default.htm>

NHS Cancer Program

<http://www.cancer.nhs.uk/>

National Cancer Institute Introduction to Clinical Trials

<http://www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/learning>

Grants/fellowships/scholarships

▶ Australian

CNSA – travel grants

http://www.cnsa.org.au/grants_scholarship_research_travel.htm

Cancer Institute NSW – education scholarships

http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer_inst/profes/scholarships.html

National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre

Polo Ralph Lauren Pink Pony Campaign

<http://www.nbocc.org.au/pinkpony/>

Queensland Health

<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/nursing/scholarships.asp>

Lions Nurses Scholarship Fund

For nurses in NSW and ACT

<http://www.nswnurses.asn.au/infopages/3065.html>

Edith Cavell Trust

NSW only

<http://www.nswnurses.asn.au/infopages/2768.html>

NSW Health

<http://www.nsw.gov.au/nursing/scholarships.asp>

Western Australia

<http://www.ocno.health.wa.gov.au/scholarships/index.cfm>

The Cancer Council NSW

Travel grants for oncology and palliative care nurses

<http://www.cancerCouncil.com.au/editorial.asp?pageid=2030>

The Cancer Council Queensland

http://www.cancerqld.org.au/page/need_support/education_programs/Health_Professional_Grants

Australian Nursing Federation (Victoria)

The annual Barry Rea Scholarship encourages and assists regional Victorian oncology nurses to continue professional development through attendance at a conference or seminar relevant to their clinical practice. (Victoria only)

McGrath Foundation

<http://www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au/our-nurses/funding-for-new-nurses>

The aim of the McGrath Foundation is to provide funding for new breast care nurses primarily in rural and regional areas of Australia, however, each application will be considered on its merits.

The College of Nursing

<http://www.nursing.edu.au/Scholarships/>

Check hospitals/area health services for local grant availability

▶ International

UICC Trish Greene International Cancer Nursing Training Workshops

http://www.uicc.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15957&Itemid=303

Useful links

▶ Australian

Cancer Institute NSW eViQ Cancer Treatments Online

<http://www.eviq.org.au/>

EdCaN

<http://www.edcan.org/>

Information about the EdCaN project and access to relevant publications, including a draft [framework](#) and competencies for Specialist Cancer Nurses

RCNA – 3LP Program

<http://3lp.rcna.org.au/>

Royal College of Nursing, Australia website to assist nurses in planning, undertaking and recording professional development (not cancer specific)

Nurse Info website

<http://www.nurseinfo.com.au/index.aspx>

Developed by the Royal College of Nursing, Australia; provides information on professional development opportunities, areas of nursing and midwifery practice, scholarships, registration, working conditions and pay, and employment opportunities (not cancer specific).

Think Nursing

<http://www.thinknursing.com/education-training/>

For nurses in Queensland

Australian Nursing Federation

<http://www.anf.org.au/>

The ANF is the national union for nurses and the largest professional nursing organisation in Australia. Provides links to state and territory bodies and other relevant nursing organisations (not cancer specific).

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council

<http://www.anmc.org.au/>

The ANMC develops standards for statutory nursing and midwifery regulation (not cancer specific).

Nursing in General Practice Recruitment and Orientation Resource

<http://generalpracticenursing.com.au/recruitment/nursing-in-general-practice-recruitment-and-orientation-resource2>

Provides information about nursing in general practice (not cancer specific)

Clinical Leadership Programme in Australia

http://www.clinicalleadership.com/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry

<http://www.anzctr.org.au/>