

## Social Work PD Pathway

- Oncology social workers assist with psychosocial problems associated with the diagnosis, treatment and management of a cancer.
- Oncology social workers are available to assist the individual with the diagnosis, family members and those who offer support. Find out how some Australian social workers have developed their careers in a range of settings.
- An oncology social worker has completed a tertiary degree in social work at a recognised university and is eligible to become a member of the Association of Australian Social Workers.

Depending on their location, oncology social workers may be involved in the care of patients with a particular cancer type or may work with a broad range of cancer patients.

Professional development opportunities are available through a range of avenues, including workplace-based learning, self-directed learning, workshops and seminars, short courses and postgraduate qualifications.

### 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. It is important that you have an understanding of a client's physical needs before you can move on to identify and assist with the social issues.

### Tips from Social Workers

#### ▶ Source good supervision

A good supervisor or mentor can be a great source of advice and support. 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.

*"The other thing I would say is find yourself a very skilled supervisor. I have a supervisor now and that's essential."* (Angela, Oncology Social Worker NSW)

*"Get terrific supervision. That's essential."* (Jill, Social Worker – radiotherapy, Vic)

*"It's important to attend to supervision with a line manager regularly – this is in accordance with the policy of Australian Association of Social Workers. The newer the graduate the more supervision time required."* (Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)

*"It's really finding the people who can mentor you – people who are approachable, who can tell you what things mean"* (Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)

*"It can be very intimidating, particularly for a new graduate, to speak up in a large meeting that's very clinically focussed... It's helpful to have someone more experienced with you who can ensure you have the confidence to speak up and advocate for your profession and for the client."* (Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)

#### ▶ Undertake self-directed learning on cancer terminology

Options may include cancer text books and cancer websites. Ask others what they have found helpful. Take the time to read journals that are circulated within your department and ask others what they have found helpful.

Good introductory cancer websites can be found in our section on [Fundamentals of Oncology](#)

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

*"It's important to have an understanding of terminology in cancer care so that when you're working with patients and families, you know what they mean when they say things... you soak it up as you go, and you learn to ask questions. Patients quickly become the experts on their condition and their treatment, so it's always good to discuss things with them."* (Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)

*"Not being medically trained, one of the biggest hurdles for me was getting used to the language and the*

concepts. Once I understood the language, I was then able to comprehend what it means to have certain cancers and treatments." **(Harry, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)**

"Definitely set aside a healthy amount of time just for reading – I think that's a must. I think it's also a must not to feel the pressure that you need to know everything about cancer. Because it's probably impossible – it's also not our job." **(Angela, Oncology Social Worker, NSW)**

▶ Attend introductory workshops on relevant topics

Workshops and seminars may be available through a range of avenues. Ask colleagues about local talks being given in your hospital or local area. You might also find external events helpful. For example, the Cancer Council in each state and territory often run workshops and seminars on a range of cancer topics. For more information, [click here](#).

"The other things I did were some other courses that weren't necessarily related to cancer but more related to social work, whether they were counselling and assessment short courses, or, you know the new domestic violence legislation, that sort of stuff." **(Angela, Oncology Social Worker, NSW)**

An important aspect in oncology social work is dealing with grief and loss. For more information visit:

- GriefLink <http://www.grieflink.asn.au/>
- Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement <http://www.grief.org.au/>

"The more you role play difficult situations, the more comfortable you get with addressing a grieving relative, or sitting quietly and just being there with someone when they are distressed" **(Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)**

▶ Learn about cancer patients' journeys

Understanding the experiences of cancer patients as they are diagnosed and treated for cancer can help you to be more empathetic towards them.

"You have to be happy to deal with long-term work from a social worker's point of view. Some other areas are very short-term crisis work but in cancer the journey is often quite lengthy. Not everybody is suited to that." **(Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)**

"People who have a great empathy and kindness towards people, and who are willing to stretch beyond themselves to help accommodate patients and families [make good social workers]. Particularly at the palliative end of things, you only get one chance to get things right." **(Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)**

"From a social work point of view it's important to know what the implications are of a diagnosis or a treatment" **(Harry, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)**

"Be where the patient is at. For example, one of the biggest issues for us here is that we have a high percentage of patients from rural areas – what does that mean for them to be living in a city, in Brisbane, for four or so months? Be a bit insightful about what that might mean for people." **(Harry, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)**

▶ Find out who's who in the cancer team

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

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

"I had really good support from my team of medicos, including nursing and occupational therapists, a dietician etc. So working closely with them was a terrific insight. I got particularly good support from a colleague – an occupational therapist – which was fantastic." **(Jill, Social Worker – radiotherapy, Vic)**

"A lot of my understanding of medical terminology comes from working with very experienced nursing staff in cancer care... they're always willing to share that knowledge with others" **(Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)**

▶ Join a relevant interest group or organisation

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](#).

*"Some of the things I went to was to take part in the Social Workers in Oncology Group which is a state based group where social workers working in oncology get together once every two months and we have professional development, networking, that sort of stuff and that was very helpful." (Angela, Oncology Social Worker, NSW)*

*"The Oncology Social Workers of Queensland has a forum once every month or two. During that session there is usually a guest speaker and an opportunity for discussion about case studies. There's also the social aspect so that if you do need to make a referral, you can put a name to a face. You also pick up from each other what is happening elsewhere and what you could do differently" (Harry, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)*

#### ▶ Taking the next step

If you are considering working in a more specialised role, you will benefit from training in the particular aspects of care or approaches you will be involved in. This may involve undertaking a course or gaining practical experience in your area of interest. You may decide to do a postgraduate qualification such as a clinical diploma or graduate certificate in your particular area of interest.

### Tips from social workers

#### ▶ Build your experience

Seek and take advantage of all opportunities as they arise. Make your interest known within your workplace, talk with other social workers in cancer care, and volunteer to take part in professional development opportunities.

*"I do think you have to be very active. I think that things are not given to you on a plate in terms of professional development. You have to seek it out." (Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)*

*"Make yourself available to learn – reading, attending and delivering... put your hand up to do things – put your hand up for a project, put your hand up for different courses, put your hand up for presentations to peers and to the community." (Harry, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)*

#### ▶ Get involved in 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.

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

*"I think the Social Work Oncology Network is excellent. It's got a culture of mentoring and supporting. Allie yourself with a professional who's already on the team that will give you that informal kind of confidence, encouragement and also information sources." (Jill, Social Worker – radiotherapy, Vic)*

*"You have to make a decision to be involved. And to be aware that sometimes being involved does eat into your own time. But that's a decision that you make and it's a decision that does pay off in the end because once you become involved in things that's one of the ways that you keep up to date in what's going on because you end up on email lists and that sort of thing so that has a snowball effect." (Angela, Oncology Social Worker, NSW)*

#### ▶ Attend conferences

Attendance at relevant state-based or national conferences can be a valuable way to learn new information and to network with colleagues.

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

*"In Queensland there is the Oncology Nurses group, which includes allied health, and I make sure I go to that conference every year" (Harry, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)*

#### ▶ Attend workshops and short courses

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

*"In our hospital all social workers have regular professional development sessions – usually every week – they are on a variety of topics including cancer care and grief – so staff can keep up to date." (Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)*

#### ▶ Undertake a postgraduate qualification

Relevant postgraduate qualifications, such as a graduate certificate or diploma can be a valuable way to find out more about particular areas of care and will help you in your career progression. For a list of oncology-specific postgraduate courses, [click here](#).

▶ Undertake self-directed learning in your area of interest  
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'm also doing my PhD now in psycho-oncology, so I'm forever going to a range of different sources and when I'm desperate I just look up Google Scholar and put in an issue and that's an excellent starting point." (Jill, Social Worker – radiotherapy, Vic)*

*"I've been very fortunate to work with a psychiatrist who will often give me articles of interest... I have accessed a lot of information through her..." (Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)*

*"Also keeping up to date with textbooks and journals through both the AASW professional journal and through overseas contacts such as the American Association of Social work..." (Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)*

*"I've been involved with the National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre and get all of their literature... A lot of my learning has been through them" (Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)*

▶ Think about training in 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](#).

*"It is oncology social work but the bottom line is your generalist skills are still critical and all that other information will come gradually – don't be swamped by it." (Jill, Social Worker – radiotherapy, Vic)*  
*"Good, sound communication skills are valuable to any social worker..." (Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)*

An important aspect of training for social workers in cancer care is self-care. To access a list of self-care resources, [click here](#).

*"Self-care can be about regularly exercising- walking, swimming, dancing – or painting, or whatever works for you. I like to have a regular massage because that's about human touch and deep tissue massage. But you've actually got to book it in – that's the tip. Having something that you do regularly is really important." (Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)*

▶ 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 social workers

▶ Participate in research projects  
Social work research is an emerging area. Talk to other senior social workers and other allied health professionals in your area or contact oncology social work organisations and networks to find out more.

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. For information specifically related to professional development planning for clinical research professionals, .

▶ Get involved in delivery education and training sessions  
Becoming involved in delivering education and training sessions for other staff is a good way of sharing your expertise with others. It's also a good way to learn and make sure you keep up to date.

"Running workshops, running education and training sessions, keeps me interested, keeps me involved in the issues around me" **(Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)**

"I speak about self care which is important for all health professionals. Each time I speak about it I learn from others about what they do..." **(Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)**

"I enjoy the educational side – giving in-services and presentations to other health professionals" **(Harry, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)**

▶ Give presentations or get involved in organising relevant 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](#).

"When you speak publically – whether it be to a group of patients and families or to a group of other professionals – people ask you questions and that makes you think about answers or find answers for them, which educates you too... I like that interchange of ideas..." **(Pamela, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care, QLD)**

▶ Undertake relevant 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. 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 courses, [click here](#).

▶ Undertake training in 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. You may decide to take on an additional role, such as that of an educator or team leader. For more information, [click here](#).

▶ Case studies

Find out about what social workers do in cancer care, how they have built their careers in cancer care and what professional development activities they have found useful:

▶ Angela Cotroneo, Oncology Social Worker in a large cancer centre, Sydney

<b>Role</b>	Oncology social worker Works within a psycho-oncology service at the Sydney Cancer Centre in Sydney Counselling position across all cancers Therapeutic role for cancer patients, families and significant others Inpatients and outpatients
<b>Pathway</b>	From initial social work training, took a new graduate position within the social work department – initially covering a surgical ward (breast cancer) Stayed in social work department but moved into medical oncology and palliative care to get a range of other exposures
<b>Training and courses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Attending talks, eg Cancer Council NSW</li> <li>▶ More intensive courses – eg 5-day family therapy workshop – skills specific rather than cancer specific</li> <li>▶ Masters in couple and family therapy</li> </ul>
<b>Groups and networks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Social Workers in Oncology Group (NSW-based)</li> <li>▶ OSWA</li> <li>▶ COSA</li> </ul>
<b>What helps?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cancer Council booklets useful in the early stages</li> <li>○ Psycho-oncology Journal</li> <li>○ Journal of Psycho-Oncology</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Having a skilled supervisor</li> <li>▶ Being a member of relevant societies/organisations/groups</li> <li>▶ Masters was a clinical masters and has been useful in terms of therapeutic role</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Attending meetings and conferences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Psycho-oncology conferences</li> <li>○ COSA conference</li> <li>○ Palliative care conferences</li> <li>○ Oncology Social Work Conference</li> <li>○ Look for local conferences</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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▶ Jill Lee, Social Worker in a small radiation therapy team in regional and rural Victoria

<b>Role</b>	<p>Social worker on a small radiotherapy treatment team  Working with regional and rural patients  See all patients to identify and address patient's psychosocial needs  Provide practical, emotional, psychological, existential and emotional support  Sometimes involves counselling and sometimes will refer on</p>
<b>Pathway</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Started in education initially</li> <li>▶ Then worked with refugee children in an ESL role</li> <li>▶ Retrained as a social worker</li> <li>▶ Worked in international community development and community health fields</li> <li>▶ Moved to A&amp;E and Rehabilitation counselling</li> <li>▶ Managed a TAFE training program for social welfare workers</li> <li>▶ Came back into hands on-practice within the radiation oncology team</li> </ul>
<b>Training and courses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ In-house training from clinicians</li> <li>▶ In-services</li> <li>▶ Grief and loss sessions</li> </ul>
<b>Groups and networks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Social Workers in Oncology Group (NSW-based)</li> <li>▶ OSWA</li> <li>▶ COSA</li> </ul>
<b>What helps?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Pace yourself!</li> <li>▶ Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Psycho-oncology journal</li> <li>○ Cancer Council websites and booklets</li> <li>○ Good nursing journals</li> <li>○ Cancer Forum</li> <li>○ US websites also helpful</li> <li>○ Google Scholar is great</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Having a skilled supervisor</li> <li>▶ Support from colleagues</li> <li>▶ Networking with people in similar roles</li> <li>▶ Involvement in research projects</li> <li>▶ Being a member of relevant societies/organisations/groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ OSWA</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Attending meetings and conferences</li> </ul>

▶ Harry Glynn, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care Services, large public hospital in Brisbane

<b>Role</b>	<p>Senior Social Worker in Cancer Care Services, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, with responsibilities for:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0.5 management</li> <li>• 0.5 clinical load in medical oncology</li> </ul> <p><i>"I enjoy the challenge. I enjoy looking at service development, and I enjoy my clinical work and I enjoy people, I enjoy trying to be helpful for people... Hopefully I can help to make their lives a little more pleasant..."</i></p>
<b>Pathway</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has been working in cancer care for about the last 16 years:</li> <li>• Started as a new graduate in radiation oncology, where he worked for about five years</li> <li>• Worked in chronic kidney disease for about four years before getting a role in haematology where he worked for three or so years</li> <li>• Has been in current role for just over 12 months</li> </ul>
<b>Post-graduate training and courses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses through the Cancer Council and Leukaemia Foundation</li> <li>• Undergraduate degree in Social Work</li> </ul>
<b>Groups and networks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oncology Social Workers of Queensland</li> <li>• Australian Association of Social Workers</li> <li>• Diabetes Australia</li> <li>• Kidney Support Network of Australia</li> </ul>
<b>What helps?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having an understanding of terminology</li> <li>• Having an understanding of the impact of treatments on people</li> <li>• Active listening</li> <li>• Making use of the support from your peers and supervision</li> <li>• Reading journal articles and case studies</li> <li>• Giving in-services and presentations</li> <li>• Having students</li> </ul> <p><i>"I encourage staff to have students because I think that is a good way of learning yourself"</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending and presenting at conferences</li> <li>• Being actively involved in community-based organisations</li> <li>• Attending regular professional development sessions within the hospital</li> <li>• Using the Continuing Professional Education requirements for accreditation as a tool to structure professional development</li> <li>• Making yourself available to learn</li> <li>• Having empathy</li> <li>• Having a good relationship with the medical team</li> </ul>

▶ Pamela McNeil, Senior Social Worker, Cancer Care Services, large public hospital in Brisbane

<b>Role</b>	<p>Senior Social Worker Cancer Care, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital</p> <p><i>"I think you actually see people at their best... people (with cancer) are fighting with everything that they have to recover and to be as well as they can and to live their life as well as they can – you're surrounded by enormous courage"</i></p>
<b>Links</b>	<p>Communication skills</p> <p>Staff education and training</p>
<b>Pathway</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a new graduate worked in surgical area at the Flinders Medical Centre, where first became interested in cancer care</li> <li>• Worked for about five years at a radiation outpatient clinic in Hobart</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spent about two years working in a community-based palliative care team in Hobart</li> <li>• On moving to Brisbane, worked in geriatric rehabilitation for five years until a position in cancer care became available</li> <li>• Has been in current role since 1995</li> </ul>
<b>Training and courses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses in communication and breaking bad news, and other courses as appropriate</li> <li>• Courses run by the National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre</li> <li>• Undergraduate degree in Social Work</li> </ul>
<b>Groups and networks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oncology Social Work Association (OSWA)</li> </ul> <p><i>"I was Chair of OSWA for a couple of years. In 2005 we held the first national conference... the evaluation from participants was excellent..." Pamela, QLD</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Breast and Ovarian Centre</li> </ul>
<b>What helps?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a mentor</li> <li>• Having an understanding of terminology in cancer care</li> <li>• Able to be assertive</li> <li>• Public speaking</li> <li>• Running education and training sessions</li> <li>• Being aware of your own self care</li> <li>• Attending regular professional development sessions</li> <li>• Attending conferences</li> <li>• Actively seeking opportunities</li> <li>• Reading journal articles and other literature</li> <li>• Experiencing secondments outside cancer care</li> <li>• Feeling comfortable around cancer and illness</li> </ul> <p><i>"Make sure you feel comfortable around cancer, around illness, because you're often dealing with very sick people." Pamela, QLD</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoying long- term work</li> <li>• Having empathy and kindness</li> <li>• Role playing difficult situations</li> <li>• Having good self-awareness</li> </ul> <p><i>"It's important that people are in touch with themselves and really aware of who they are. For example, if you've had a recent bereavement of a family member and cancer, then I'd question how they were feeling because things can be triggered and it's not our need, it's the patient's need or the family's need that's important... A bereavement can inform your practise and knowledge but you do need some distance from your own loss before working with others who are facing major loss."</i></p>

## Organisations and networks

▶ Australian

**Australian Association of Social Workers** - <http://www.aasw.asn.au/>

Professional representative body of social workers in Australia. It has a code of ethics which contains a set of principles agreed to by all members. These principles guide all social work practice. Membership is dependent on achievement of continuing professional education requirements.

**Oncology Social Work Australia (OSWA)** - <http://www.oswa.net.au/>  
OSWA is the peak organisation for Australian Oncology Social Workers.

**COSA Social Workers Group** - <http://www.cosa.org.au/groups/social-work.html>  
COSA is Australia's peak national body representing health professionals whose main work is cancer control.

**The Cancer Council Queensland** -  
[http://www.cancerqld.org.au/page/Need\\_support/Education\\_Programs/AHPOG](http://www.cancerqld.org.au/page/Need_support/Education_Programs/AHPOG)  
Fee-based group auspiced by The Cancer Council Queensland to provide health professionals from cancer patient care and public health backgrounds an opportunity for continuing education and eligibility for grant application. Annual membership is \$20 (GST inclusive), renewable in July every year.

**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.

**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

**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. Website includes resources and tools, online lectures, publications and other information. Click on 'professionals' link on website.

**American Psychosocial Oncology Society** - <http://www.apos-society.org/professionals/meetings-ed/webcasts.aspx>  
US-based society. Provides some online educational modules as well as other resources and tools.

**Social Work in Hospice and Palliative Care Network** - <http://www.swhpn.org/>  
An emerging network of social work organisations and leaders who seek to further the field of end-of-life and hospice/palliative care.

**National Association of Social Workers** - <http://www.socialworkers.org/>  
US-based membership organisation of professional social workers. Works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies.

## Conference/Event listings

▶ Australian

Australian Association of Social Workers  
<http://www.aasw.asn.au/events/category/all-events>

Clinical Oncological Society of Australia  
<http://www.cosa.org.au/asm.html>

Cancer Institute NSW  
[http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer\\_inst/profes/con\\_diary.html](http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer_inst/profes/con_diary.html)

▶ International

International Psycho-Oncology Society  
<http://ipos-society.org/calendar.aspx>

## Courses and workshops

### ▶ Postgraduate qualifications

This section lists relevant postgraduate qualifications. A range of other postgraduate qualifications, including PhDs, are also available that may be relevant for you. Talk to colleagues or professional bodies for more information.

### Graduate certificate/graduate diploma

Graduate certificate courses are typically 1-year courses and represent the baseline entry level programs for a Masters qualification. Graduate diploma qualifications are typically shorter than Masters programs and often have more flexible entry criteria. Some institutions offer part-time and distance learning options.

Topics may include:

- Social work
- Bereavement intervention
- Grief and palliative care counselling
- Professional practice supervision
- Adult education
- Training and development

### Masters

A Masters qualification is typically 2 years in duration although many institutions offer part-time and distance education options.

Topics may include:

- Social work
- Master of Arts (social work) – research based
- Couples and family therapy
- Counselling
- Grief and palliative care counselling
- Education (Adult Education)

Entrance requirements vary by institution and course.

### ▶ 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?

**Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (PEPA) - <http://www.pepaeducation.com/>**

The Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (PEPA) is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, funded through the National Palliative Care Program. The overall aim of the program is to improve the quality and accessibility of palliative care services to all people with life-limiting conditions and their families.

PEPA provides you with an opportunity to develop your knowledge and skills in the palliative approach to care through:

- funded clinical workforce placements or workshops
- integration of learning into your workplace
- establishing networks of support.

**Certificate IV Competency-based assessment and work-based training**

Vocational training course offered through a variety of institutions

▶ Workshops/seminars

**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](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](http://www.cancervic.org.au/about-cancer/for-health-professionals/training_courses_and_education)

▶ General non-clinical skills

You may find it helpful to undertake training in a range of general skills. Courses on computing or information technology may be available through local area health services or your institution. Courses on statistics may be offered through TAFE or university settings.

**Communication skills training**

National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre

<http://www.nbocc.org.au/health-professionals/clinical-best-practice/communication-skills>

Cancer Council Victoria Cancer Clinicians Communication Program <http://www.cancervic.org.au/vcccp>

Pam McLean Cancer Communications Centre <http://www.mcleancentre.org/>

### **Self-care**

Cancer Learning list of Self-care resources [Work/Life Balance](#)

### **Self-directed learning**

▶ Online resources

**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/](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 - coming soon

**GriefLink** - <http://www.grieflink.asn.au/>

An information resource on death-related grief for the community and professionals.

**Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement** - <http://www.grief.org.au/>

An independent, not for profit organisation that is the largest provider of grief and bereavement education in Australia.

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

Online resource of palliative care information and evidence.

**National Association of Social Workers Standards for Social Work Practice in Palliative and End of Life Care** - <http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/bereavement/standards/default.asp>

**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

**Clinician's Health Channel** - <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/clinicians/>

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

**National Cancer Institute ‘Understanding Cancer Series’** - <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics>  
Online information about cancer biology, different cancer types, diagnosis, screening and treatment

**MacMillan Cancer Support** - <http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/Aboutcancer/AboutcancerHome.aspx>  
Online background information about cancer written for consumers

**Social Care Online** - <http://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/>  
UK-based free database of social care information. Includes research briefings, reports, government documents, journal articles, and website links.

## Grants/fellowships/scholarships

▶ Australian

Individual health services and institutions may provide an annual allowance to support professional development activities. Talk to your manager or colleagues for more information. In addition, individual grants, fellowships or scholarships may be available to support specific activities from other organisations.

**Cancer Institute NSW** – education scholarships and travel grants  
[http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer\\_inst/profes/prof\\_development.html](http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer_inst/profes/prof_development.html)

**Cancer Council Queensland** – Allied Health Professionals Oncology Group  
[http://www.cancerqld.org.au/page/Need\\_support/Education\\_Programs/AHPOG](http://www.cancerqld.org.au/page/Need_support/Education_Programs/AHPOG)

**Cancer Council NSW** - Regional, Rural and Remote Scholarships for Health Professionals  
<http://www.cancerCouncil.com.au/editorial.asp?pageid=686>

## Useful links

▶ Australian

**Cancer Institute NSW** - <https://www.eviq.org.au/>  
Cancer Institute NSW eviQ Cancer Treatments Online website

▶ International

**National Cancer Institute Office of Cancer Survivorship**  
<http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/ocs/index.html>

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