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Importance of work environment for oncology nurses

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Background

Problems related to nurses' work environment are more serious in oncology wards and often unpleasant due to the complexities of cancer treatment and care. The clinical work environment of oncology nurses is unique because nursing practices include specific nursing skills and knowledge, such as administering chemotherapy and antineoplastic medicines and managing medical devices. The aim of this scoping review is to explore studies related to the work environment in oncology nursing and adopted a scoping review study framework.

Methods

This review adopted a scoping review study framework, using electronic databases including MEDLINE, AMED, CINAHL, PubMed, and Cochrane Library using search keywords: "oncology", "safety" and "nursing" from 1 January 2005 and 31 December 2021.

Results

Oncology nurses are likely to get sharp injuries when performing routine procedures, such as vein punctures in their work environment. According to the studies the oncology working environment is highly stressful, unsafe, and complicated. This may have negative effects on the quality of care provided to cancer patients and could also reduce nurses' job satisfaction and increases nurses' stress levels. Moreover, some studies show that although personal protective equipment is one of the strategies to reduce nurses' exposure to hazardous drugs, most nurses do not have access to standard chemotherapy rooms and personal protective equipment. Such a shortage of space and equipment can cause occupational stress and job burnout for nurses.

Conclusions

Several studies showed the importance of supporting oncology nurses in the clinical environment. Continuing education programs, active encouragement for adhering to safety standards, and correcting unsafe approaches to care delivery can help create a safe environment for nurses. Also, education about stress management, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and mental health may help nurses and increase their flexibility in dealing with stress and work-related challenges. It is necessary to create an organized and systematic work environment to support the efficient practice of oncology nurses and make improvements at the administrative level.

Legal entity responsible for the study

E. Güneş.

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